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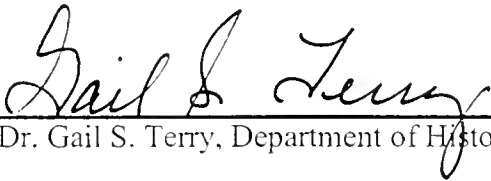
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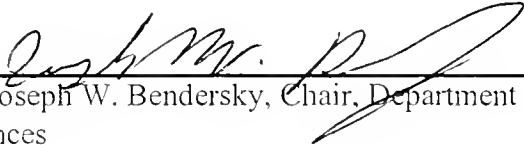
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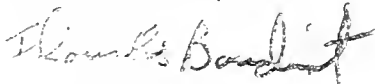
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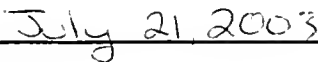
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**ANTEBELLUM PIEDMONT VIRGINIA: THE LAND OF SODOM OR A LAND
OF OPPORTUNITY?:**

**THE LIVES AND IMPRESSIONS OF THREE TRANSPLANTED NEW
ENGLANDERS**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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ABSTRACT

ANTEBELLUM PIEDMONT VIRGINIA: THE LAND OF SODOM OR A LAND OF OPPORTUNITY?: THE LIVES AND IMPRESSIONS OF THREE TRANSPLANTED NEW ENGLANDERS

By Rosa Lee Furr, M.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University, 2003.

Major Director: Dr. Philip J. Schwarz, Professor of History, Department of History

In nineteenth-century America, conflict between egalitarianism and elitism intensified with the expansion of geographic boundaries and internal migration. This paradox was clearly evident in nineteenth-century Virginia where an ongoing struggle for egalitarian republicanism ensued. When white, middle-class New Englanders moved to Virginia's Piedmont region, therefore, their individual quests for personal improvement and social mobility led them to confront, and adapt to, a very different society. Elijah Fletcher was a native of Ludlow, Vermont, and the son of Jesse Fletcher, a respectable farmer of modest means. Elijah moved to Virginia in the summer of 1810 and obtained a teaching position in Alexandria. He moved to Amherst County in May 1811 and served as president of the New Glasgow Academy. In 1812, he married Maria Antoinette Crawford, the daughter of an affluent slaveowner. Through his industry and good management, he excelled as a landowner. Anna Howe and her sister Emily moved to Virginia because of their widowed mother's scanty budget. There were more openings in teaching positions for both genders in the South than in Massachusetts; also, there was less financial discrepancy between male and female teachers' pay. While Anna opposed

Virginia's slave society, Emily married a slaveowner. Elijah Fletcher, Emily (Howe) Dupuy and Anna (Howe) Whitteker had either embraced or, at minimum, accommodated themselves to Piedmont Virginia's slave society. This thesis examines the extent and character of their assimilation to Piedmont Virginia's culture and this study analyzes their aspirations and views and the accommodations they made when they settled in the state. This thesis also attempts to answer if, or how, Elijah Fletcher, Anna (Howe) Whitteker and Emily (Howe) Dupuy influenced their respective communities' developments. This study departs from previous works in its analysis of how transplanted Northerners shaped (and were shaped by) Virginia slave societies. These three transplanted New Englanders represented distinct qualities which characterized nineteenth-century Americans' concepts of opportunity, autonomy, networks, familial duty, freedom and the quest for the American dream. Elijah Fletcher, Anna Howe Whitteker and Emily Howe Dupuy obtained their aspirations, but two of them did so by perpetuating Virginia's slave system. The following chapters reveal the reasons, motives and accomplishments of these three singular lives.

INTRODUCION

In nineteenth-century America, conflict between egalitarianism and elitism intensified with the expansion of geographic boundaries and internal migration. By 1850, for example, 2,063,601 free Southerners had migrated to the West and North, and 216,604 Northerners and Westerners had emigrated to the slave states. By 1860, 3,129,111 free Southerners had left to seek their fortunes in the North and West, and 369,817 persons from the West and North had moved to the slave states. Virginia's regions mirrored both the ties that bound and the rifts that severed the South and North. Between 1830 and 1860, for example, the black population outnumbered whites in almost fifty Virginia counties and cities. In 1830, Piedmont Virginia, where large slaveowners perpetuated their agricultural, social and political domination over non-slaveholding whites and small, independent farmers, had 320,604 slaves (who represented 68 percent of all Virginia slaves) and 208,656 whites. When white, middle-class New Englanders moved to Virginia's Piedmont region, therefore, their individual quests for personal improvement and social mobility led them to confront, and adapt to, a very different society.¹

¹ William W. Freehling, The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay 1776-1854, Vol. 1, (New York, 1990): 39-54, 40, 162-171; Census data as calculated by Philip J. Schwarz in Migrants Against Slavery: Virginians and the Nation (Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), pp. 8-11, from U.S. Superintendent of the Census, Report of the Superintendent of the Census for December 1, 1852; to Which is Appended the Report for December 1, 1851 (Washington, D.C., 1853), xxxvi-xxxviii; U.S. Census, Statistics of the United States, (Including Mortality, Property, &c.) in 1860 (Washington, D.C., 1866): lxi-lxii; Philip J. Schwarz, Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia, 1705-1865 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 97; for Piedmont Virginia's white population in 1830 see Alison Goodyear Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 269.

While living in Lewisburg, Virginia in 1836, Anna Howe, a school teacher from Princeton, Massachusetts, observed the unprecedented exodus from Virginia. Masses of people who passed through her town seeking their fortunes in the West included both the very wealthy and their slaves, and destitute travelers. The poorest traveled “barefooted, dirty and ragged” with “only one poor old horse to bring their baggage, and . . . sometimes the old horse dies, and they are seen pulling the cart themselves.”² Many Virginians left their home state because their slave society sustained economic disparities and class restrictions. Anna noted how Virginians’ financial status altered when they moved West and profited from their slaves’ labors: “They take their slaves with them, and one who went 2 years since (a cousin of Mrs. I. who has 100 slaves, was here a few days ago. He says each of his hands made [torn] \$500 last year, raising cotton, fifty thousand dolls! A handsome s[um].”²

The combination of geographic expansion and the increase in internal migration augmented a paradox that characterized nineteenth-century America: the discordant integration between egalitarianism and elitism. This paradox was clearly evident in nineteenth-century Virginia where an ongoing struggle for egalitarian republicanism ensued. The state’s upper class upheld the eighteenth-century Enlightenment ideology that only ‘natural aristocrats’ had the inborn capacity to govern with wisdom, self-control and honor. The ideology of egalitarianism countermanded the aristocrats’ defense of

²A.H. [Anna Howe] to “Dear Sister” [Emily Howe], May 10, 1835, EDP.

elitism by asserting that strong character, discernment and industry - and not one's bloodlines and wealth - determined a citizen's rights.³

In 1847 Dr. Henry Ruffner, who served as president of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia, observed that more people had emigrated from Virginia "than all of the original free states combined." Between 1830 and 1840, approximately 304,000 eastern Virginians and 71,000 western Virginians had migrated to the West. The need for teachers in Piedmont Virginia was considerable. The curricula in several southern academies were barely above the "primary-level field schools." Graduates of southern schools, therefore, were not always qualified to educate the upper and middle-class students who attended the academies. Until the 1840's, Virginia's academies usually hired graduates from northern or European institutions. Prior to the 1840's many upper-class Southerners obtained their secondary and advanced educations in either the North or in Europe. Most Southerners who graduated from northern schools, however, either entered medicine or law, or began managing their estates. On the other hand, almost 5 percent of northern graduates taught at plantation schools (which offered primary to secondary-level curricula) and academies in the South.⁴ When Elijah Fletcher, Anna Howe and Emily Howe (three New England teachers) traveled to Piedmont Virginia

³William W. Freehling, The Road to Disunion, 162-166, 37-39, 51, 61, 64.

⁴ Elizabeth Brown Pryor, "An Anomalous Person: The Northern Teacher in Plantation Society, 1773-1860," Journal of Southern History 13 (Spring 1980): 354-67; Lawrence Ray Drinkwater, "Of Scholarship and Honor: Frederick William Coleman and Concord Academy, 1835-1849," Southern Studies III (2) (Summer 1992):117-133; Clement Eaton, Freedom of Thought in the Old South (Durham, North Carolina, 1940): 238-239. Richard M. Bernard and Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Antebellum Massachusetts," Journal of Social History 10 (March 1977): 332-338; Herbert Clarence Bradshaw, History of Prince Edward County, Virginia: From its Earliest Settlements through its Establishment in 1754 To its Bicentennial Year (Richmond, 1955):166.

between 1810 and 1836, southern newspapers were encouraging Northerners to come to Virginia. The *Richmond Enquirer*, for example, noted that “an infusion of a little Yankee industry and capital into the arteries of Virginia will produce a beneficial effect.”⁵

Elijah Fletcher was a native of Ludlow, Vermont, and the son of Jesse Fletcher, a respectable farmer of modest means. Elijah moved to Virginia in the summer of 1810 and obtained a teaching position in Alexandria. He moved to Amherst County in May 1811 and served as president of the New Glasgow Academy. In 1813, he married Maria Antoinette Crawford, the daughter of an affluent slaveowner. Through his industry and good management, he excelled as a landowner. He and his wife moved to Lynchburg in 1817 and in 1831 he purchased a plantation which his wife named Sweetbrier. By 1850 he was among Amherst County’s most prosperous landowners, owning 105 slaves. After his wife’s death in 1853, he lived at Sweetbrier. He died there in 1858.⁶

Anna Howe and her sister Emily moved to Virginia because of their widowed mother’s scanty budget. There were more openings in teaching positions for both genders in the South than in Massachusetts; also, there was less financial discrepancy between male and female teachers’ pay. For example, according to Richard M. Bernard and Maris A. Vinovkis, there was a 60 percent discrepancy in male and female teachers’ salaries in antebellum Massachusetts. In the South, male and female teachers made similar salaries,

⁵ David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Away, I’m Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Richmond, 1993):121-122; quotation in *Richmond Enquirer*, June 26, 1845.

⁶ Martha von Briesen, ed., *The Letters of Elijah Fletcher* (Charlottesville, 1965): xv-xix. Note: the spelling of the Fletcher’s plantation, “Sweetbrier,” differs from the spelling of Sweet Briar College, which was founded by Elijah Fletcher’s daughter, Indiana (Fletcher) Williams and chartered by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1901. See *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

which ranged between \$200 to \$500 per year.⁷ Anna Howe moved from Princeton, Massachusetts, to Cumberland County, Virginia, in April of 1834, where she began to teach the children of Colonel James (?) Isbell, who was a slaveowner. Her dislike of Cumberland's slave society and her financial needs prompted her subsequent decisions to migrate to other Virginia counties as well as to other southern and western states. Around October 1842 she married Rev. Henry Whitteker, who died in 1845. Her younger sister, Emily Howe, moved to Prince Edward County, Virginia, in April of 1836 to accept a teaching position from Reverend Matthew Dance, a Methodist minister. She, like Anna, commented on the gentry's laziness, dependence on slaves, and lack of industry, but she became very attached to Prince Edward's community. Against Anna's advice, Emily married Colonel Asa Dupuy, a wealthy slaveowner, on January 30, 1838. When Emily's husband died in 1849, Anna and her mother moved to Prince Edward to help Emily manage the plantation. After her husband died, Emily managed his plantation of 1600 acres and fifty-eight slaves. She oversaw the estate until well after Reconstruction. She died in 1883.⁸ While Elijah Fletcher and Emily (Howe) Dupuy embraced Virginia's slave society, Anna (Howe) Whitteker reluctantly accommodated to Piedmont Virginia's

⁷ In reference to teachers' salaries in the North and South see Pryor, "An Anomalous Person," pp. 362-367.

⁸ Nowhere in the Emily (Howe) Dupuy letters is there a reference to the given name of Colonel Isbell. This could be James Isbell whose number and ages of children in the 1830 census correspond to the number and ages of Col. Isbell's children to whom Anna refers in her letters. See United States Department of State, "Population Schedules of the 5th Census 1830" (Microfilm, the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia), p. 196; see also Correspondence of Anna Howe, EDP, VHS. Anna Howe to Emily Howe, April 24, 1834 and January 4, 1835, *ibid*; Carroll Franklin Adams, "A New England Teacher in Southside Virginia: A Study of Emily Howe, 1812-1883" (M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia, 1954). pp. 15-16, 46, 57, 65, 80; Inventory of Asa Dupuy's Estate, proved 25 January 1848, Prince Edward County Will Book 9, 1844-1853, pp. 252-253. Emily Howe Dupuy died in Danville, Virginia, while staying in the home of her second eldest daughter, Maria Dupuy Anderson. See Adams, "A New England Teacher," pp. 127-132.

slave society. Anna tolerated slavery within the confines of her sister's home, and often wrote that Emily was a humane mistress, but her intolerance of Piedmont Virginia's slave society remained unchanged. This thesis examines the extent and character of their assimilation to Piedmont Virginia's culture. Anna believed that slaves were entitled to their individual rights for an education, Christian development, security and compensation for their labor. Like Anna, Elijah and Emily highly valued education, but while Emily allowed Anna to teach her slaves, Elijah never mentioned his slaves' education in his correspondence. Neither Elijah nor Emily acknowledged slaves' individual rights to control their own lives or benefit from their labors. Both justified slavery by focusing on a master's paternalism within the confines of the plantation system.

Many works have focused on the compatibility (or lack thereof) between industrialism and slavery. Eugene Genovese argues that Southerners' heavy investment in the plantation economy and slavery caused the South's urban endeavors to deteriorate. In Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism: Virginia, 1847-1861, David R. Goldfield asserts that Virginia had the progressive spirit and resources to create strong urban areas, but intra-regional discord and competition hindered the state's potential to gain commercial independence through inter-regional trade. Edward Pessen contends that the possibilities for social mobility were limited in both the North and South; as a result, many whites in both regions took advantage of geographic mobility. These works address the distinctiveness and viability of southern economy in relation to the North, but

they do not focus on the economic and social impact that transplanted Northerners had upon the South.⁹

A great deal of literature has examined either the ties that bound or the wedges that severed the South and North. C. Vann Woodward, George Fredrickson, and others elucidate the extent to which racism linked the two regions. Although these works are comparative, they do not address how white supremacist views shaped the lives of people who moved from one region and settled in another. Philip J. Schwarz, David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly analyze the national impacts that black and white Virginians had when they migrated “to a more free land than Virginia.” David Hackett Fischer and William R. Taylor address the nature, evolution, interaction, compromise, and adaptation of dominant cultures within the nation; but they do not examine the impact that internal migration had upon Virginia’s sub-regions and her communities. Douglas R. Egerton, Elizabeth R. Varon, Catherine E. Kelly and others have analyzed the North’s and South’s distinctive interpretations of, and practices of, evangelicalism, republican ideology, and reform; but they do not discuss how transplanted Northerners reacted to, and participated in religious revivals, reform movements, education, and Internal Improvements in the South.¹⁰

⁹ Eugene D. Genovese The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy & Society of the Slave South (New York: Pantheon, 1965); David R. Goldfield, Urban Growth in the Age of Sectionalism: Virginia, 1847-1861 (Baton Rouge and London, 1977); Edward Pessen, “How Different From Each Other Were the Antebellum North and South?” American Historical Review LXXXV (December 1980):1124-1134.

¹⁰ C. Vann Woodward, American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue (Boston, 1971); George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York, 1971); Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill, 1968); Joanne Pope Melish Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860; Schwarz, Migrants Against Slavery,

Accounts of white Northerners who moved either temporarily or permanently to the antebellum South disclose their diverse views of slavery, southern culture, and regional strife. To a limited degree, they also expressed the extent of their adaptations to slave societies. In “A New England Teacher in Southside Virginia: A Study of Emily Howe, 1812-1883,” for example, Carroll Franklin Adams provides a solid biographical account of a New England teacher who eventually became a slaveowner. Mr. Adams, however, does not adequately explain the significant differences between Emily (Howe) Dupuy’s and Anna (Howe) Whitteker’s adaptations to distinct Virginia slave societies. Adams claims that Emily’s outgoing tolerant personality and Anna’s rigid, puritanical beliefs determined their views on Virginia communities. Although these works appreciate the idiosyncratic novelty of Northerners’ interactions with, and acculturations to, slave societies, they do not examine the factors that influenced their decisions, or the manner in which they perpetuated the slave system.¹¹

Two works slightly relate to this thesis. Elizabeth Brown Pryor’s “An Anomalous Person: The Northern Tutor in Plantation Society, 1773-1860,” assesses the views that

quotation on p. 17; David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, Away, I’m Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement; David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York, 1989); William Robert Taylor, Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character (Garden City, New York, 1963); Douglas R. Egerton, Rebels, Reformers & Revolutionaries: Collected Essays and Second Thoughts (New York and London, 2002); Elizabeth R. Varon, We Mean to Be Counted: White Women & Politics in Antebellum Virginia (Chapel Hill and London, 1998); Catherine E. Kelly, In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women’s Lives in the Nineteenth Century (Ithaca and London, 1999); John Patrick Daly, When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War (Lexington, KY, 2002); Mary H. Blewett, Constant Turmoil: The Politics of Industrial Life in Nineteenth-Century New England (Amherst, Massachusetts, 2000).

¹¹ See, for example, Robert C. McLean, ed., “A Yankee Tutor in the Old South,” North Carolina Historical Review XLVII (1) (January 1970) : 51-85; Wilma King, (ed.), A Northern Woman in the Plantation South: Letters of Tryphena Blanche Holder Fox, 1856-1876 (Columbia, 1993); Martha von Briesen, ed., The Letters of Elijah Fletcher (Charlottesville, 1965); Adams, “A New England Teacher in Southside Virginia.”

white northern men and women held and the adjustments they made while living in the South. This study does not include those tutors who remained permanently in the South. Ann Patton Malone compares and contrasts transplanted Northerners' choices to maintain and divide slave families with the decisions made by southern slaveowners. Neither one of these works addresses the adjustments and decisions that transplanted New Englanders made when they settled in Virginia.¹²

In 1850, 36,711 Northerners and Westerners lived in Virginia and 31,609 people from the North and West remained in Virginia in 1860.¹³ What incentives did Virginia provide that made them stay? This thesis analyzes the aspirations, views of, and the accommodations made by, three transplanted New Englanders who settled in Piedmont Virginia. It also explains if, or how, Elijah Fletcher, Anna (Howe) Whitteker and Emily (Howe) Dupuy influenced their respective communities' developments. This study departs from previous works in its analysis of how transplanted Northerners shaped (and were shaped by) Virginia slave societies. These three transplanted New Englanders represented distinct qualities which characterized nineteenth-century Americans and their quest for the American dream. Elijah Fletcher, Anna Howe Whitteker and Emily Howe Dupuy obtained their aspirations, but two of them did so by perpetuating Virginia's slave system. These three individuals illustrate the development of egalitarianism and reform and the continuity of social control. While Anna was more egalitarian in her views about

¹² Pryor, "An Anomalous Person," pp. 354-67; Ann Patton Malone, Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana (Chapel Hill, 1992).

¹³ Census data as calculated by Philip J. Schwarz in Migrants Against Slavery, from U.S. Superintendent of the Census, Report of the Superintendent of the Census for December 1, 1852; to Which is Appended in the Report for December 1, 1851, xxxvi-xxxviii.

slaves' labor and blacks' potential, Emily and Elijah perpetuated social control through a slave system. The following chapters reveal the reasons, motives and accomplishments of these three singular lives.

CHAPTER ONE

ELIJAH FLETCHER

“I should not have known the value of prosperity if I had not been in adversity. I now view future prospects with a smile. I have launched my leaky barge upon the variously undulating ocean of the world. I mean to make christian honesty, but not christian hypocracy, my helm, perseverance and ambition my gale. Whether my voyage will prove prosperous or otherwise, at what haven I shall at last land, God only knows.
- – Elijah Fletcher¹

The Yankee exodus from antebellum New England started before the American Revolution, but the region’s migration movement amplified after the war when the former American colonies started to form their new country. Various reasons influenced Northerners’ decisions to seek their prosperity elsewhere in the North, West and occasionally in the South. The desire for land and the ambition to better one’s worldly position were dominant motivations. Also, many Congregational visionaries left the North to inspire and redeem “that new and savage country” in the West and the “Devil’s own region” in the South by espousing their convictions about education, religion and slavery. Industry, self-improvement, reform and the public good motivated many Yankees to create a new life for themselves elsewhere. Many male Northerners who migrated to the South were teachers, ministers, editors, businessmen, lawyers, doctors and slaveowners. The impact that Northerners had upon their new nation was exceptional. When a need existed for “a schoolhouse to be built, a road to be built, a school teacher or minister to be maintained or taxes to be paid for the honor or support of

¹ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher October 31, 1810 in Martha von Briesen, ed. The Letters of Elijah Fletcher (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965), p. 21.

government,” Governor Thomas Ford of Illinois asserted, “the northern man is never found wanting.”² Among those who fitted this description was Elijah Fletcher of Ludlow, Vermont.

Elijah Fletcher, who was the fourth son in a family of fifteen children, migrated in 1810 from Ludlow, Vermont to Alexandria, Virginia. His motives for leaving New England stemmed from his ambition to improve his financial circumstances. His reasons for migrating to another region were similar to those which had motivated his father, Jesse Fletcher (1763-1831), who was the third son and the youngest child of six children, to join the Yankee exodus during the eighteenth century. Jesse had a powerful impact upon his son. Like his father, Elijah became an influential civic leader in his adopted state. One of the most crucial differences between Jesse and Elijah, however, was Elijah’s superior sense for business and enterprise, which had made him one of the wealthiest men in Lynchburg and Amherst County, Virginia. Jesse was a highly respected man in his town, but he had led a life full of debts and economic scarcity. Elijah’s knowledge of, and heartbreak over his father’s financial struggles instigated his ambition to live a life of debtless security and respectability. Throughout his life, Elijah possessed an incredible sense of duty to his family. From the first year of his residence in Virginia until his death, Elijah made tremendous financial contributions to support his parents and aid his siblings. In order to understand both Elijah’s relationships with his family and his

² Stewart H. Holbrook, The Yankee Exodus: An Account of Migration from New England (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Madison College Library, 1950), p. 10, 39-64, 297- 312 quotations on pp. 39, 40, 64.

reasons for settling in Virginia, one needs to comprehend his family, their struggles and Elijah's experiences in his home state.³

In 1782, a year after he married Lucy Keyes, twenty year old Jesse Fletcher left his birth place, Westford, Massachusetts with his seventeen year old bride, their newborn baby Charlotte and - accompanied by his brother Josiah and a couple of men from Massachusetts - migrated to Ludlow, Vermont. In this township which "contained unknown thousands of acres of howling wilderness" and which was inhabited by only one family, Jesse spent his entire inheritance to purchase 100 acres near Black River.⁴ In the beginning decades, Ludlow remained a forested, dispersed town with a population of less than 500 persons. The town's first newspaper, railroad, woolen mill, and manufacturing companies did not begin until the mid-nineteenth century. As one of the town's first settlers, Jesse was better educated than most residents and he played a leading role in the town's development. He organized numerous schools throughout the town by serving as selectman, moderator and clerk. The first school was built in 1800 under his guidance and by 1808 the school had seventy scholars. In 1806 Jesse's fourteen year old daughter, Lucy, was the second teacher to teach at Mountain school district which was built under Jesse's leadership. Young men in the town acquired advanced education by attending

³ Jesse Fletcher (1763-1831) was the son of Timothy and Bridget (Richardson) Fletcher. See Joseph N. Harris, History of Ludlow, Vermont (Charlestown, N.H. Publishers, 1949), pp. 14-191; Gayle Thornbrough, ed. The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Volume I 1817-1838: Including Letters of Calvin Fletcher and Diaries and Letters of his Wife Sarah Hill Fletcher (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972), pp. xvii, n. 1, xviii-xx; von Briesen, The Letters of Elijah Fletcher, p. 277.

⁴ Ludlow was founded on September 16, 1761 but the town was not organized until 1792; see Harris, History of Ludlow, Vermont, pp. 13-16, 78-79; Holbrook, The Yankee Exodus, pp. 10-15, quote on p. 10; Thornbrough, ed. The Diary of Calvin Fletcher: Volume I, 1817-1838, pp. xvii, xviii-xx; Martha von Briesen, pp. 277.

Middlebury, Randolph Normal school or Burlington until the creation of Black River Academy in 1834. Prior to 1808, the Congregational Church, of which Jesse was a pious member, was the dominant denomination. There were small handfuls of Baptists, Universalists and Methodists who met in homes and schools until their respective churches were built after 1824. Jesse “was a real Puritan in many things,” stated his son Calvin, and he “was uncommonly rigid in relations to the Sabbath . . . He was studious. Read much. A very good historian, & always took a newspaper & the Bible.”⁵

Although Jesse was successful as a civil leader, his skills as a farmer were less fruitful. With no additional resources to support his wife and fifteen children, Jesse lived a life full of many impediments and struggles. His son Calvin later observed that his father “was not skilful in expedients or a very good contriver. No trader nor very skilful in husbandry, & having thus to overcome these obstacles before him, he labored hard & lived poor.”⁶ Jesse educated his older children more thoroughly than he did the others and Elijah was the first to receive a college education. From 1806 to 1810 the family worked and sacrificed so that their fifteen year old Elijah could prepare for college by attending Westford Academy in Massachusetts, after that he attended Middlebury College in Vermont for two years, spent a year at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and then returned to Middlebury College. Many male scholars from Vermont and Massachusetts

⁵ Jesse attended common schools and studied law temporarily under his Uncle E. in Hopkinton until the Revolutionary War started. See Harris, pp. 14-191; Jesse served as: the first selectman 1792 -1801, 1803-1808; the first town clerk 1792, 1795-1809; the first treasurer 1792-1793, 1795-1799; the town’s representative to the state legislature, 1798-1799; and Justice of the Peace for thirty years. The family’s heritage exists to this day. For example, the Fletcher Memorial Library (1900) was built in memory of one of Jesse’s sons, Stoughton A Fletcher. See Harris, pp. 16, 78-85, 112, 191; Thornbrough, pp. xix-xx, n. 6, quote on p. xix; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, August 20, 1831, von Briesen, p. 125.

⁶ Harris, pp. 16, 78-85; Thornbrough, pp. xviii-xix, quote on p. xix.

attended Middlebury, and many of the college's graduates migrated out of the region. Of the twenty-seven graduates of the class of 1822, for example, twenty-one left New England and settled elsewhere.⁷

Education for men and women in nineteenth-century America underwent slow developments. During the 1840's both genders had the option of attending colleges, for example, but no more than 1% of the nation's white population attended colleges and universities between 1840 and 1860. Northern school teachers' main advantage for teaching in the South was monetary gain. In the North, male teachers received approximately \$200 a year. Virginia counties had very few district schools, but wealthy planters had school houses on their plantations, and they paid generous wages to private tutors. When northern educators moved to the South to teach, their salaries increased between 60 to 150 percent.⁸ Tutors who lacked a college education obtained \$300-400 a year. Teachers with college degrees usually taught at southern academies and received approximately \$900.⁹ Many northern male tutors who taught in the South had college degrees, while most female teachers had obtained an academic education. There were a

⁷ The twenty-one Middlebury College graduates who migrated elsewhere died in: California, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. See Holbrook, p. 268. Jesse and Lucy Fletcher's children were: Charlotte (1784-1795); Stephen (1784-1790) Michael (1785-1859, Indianapolis, IN); Fanny (1786-1872, Newark, NY); Jesse (1785-1848); **Elijah (July 28, 1789-February 13, 1858, Sweet Briar, VA);** Timothy (1791-1870); Lucy (1792-1888, Newark); Stephen II (1794-1818, New Orleans, LA); Laura (1796-1844, Newark); Calvin (1798-1866, Indianapolis); Miles (1799- ?); Dexter (1801-1803); Louisa (1804-1836, Newark); Stoughton (1808-1882, Indianapolis). See von Briesen, pp. 277, xv, 268-73, 7, n.11, 3-15; Thornbrough, p. xix-xxii.

⁸ Carl F. Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), pp. 62-74; Elizabeth Brown Pryor, "An Anomalous Person: the Northern Teacher in Plantation Society, 1773-1860," Journal of Southern History 13 (Spring 1980), pp. 367-371.

⁹ von Briesen, pp. 16, 17, 58, quotation in Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, October 1, 1810, p. 16; Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, pp. 122-132.

few northern male and female teachers in the South who were self-taught. Middle-class, northern male graduates usually entered the teaching profession temporarily in order to pay off debts, and they used their profession as a stepping stone to enter more prominent, professional fields. Many teachers were from the middle class; but whether they were poor or reasonably well off, the profession improved most northern male teachers' opportunities for upward mobility. Historian Elizabeth Brown Pryor identifies about 100 northern tutors who taught in the post-revolutionary and antebellum South; for example, 71% became college professors, doctors, ministers and lawyers.¹⁰

While at Middlebury, Elijah received an offer from Raleigh Academy in North Carolina to teach for a salary of \$600.00 on the condition that he achieved a bachelor of liberal arts degree. In order to obtain this employment, Elijah transferred to the University of Vermont during the spring of 1810 where he obtained his degree in June. On July 4th 1810, twenty-one year old Elijah with only twenty dollars in his possession left Ludlow and started his 700 mile journey to Raleigh where he rode upon his mare for about fifty miles each day eating nothing but bread, cheese and milk. During and after that period, most of Elijah's siblings left Vermont and settled elsewhere.¹¹ Elijah's brother Calvin noted the risk and heartaches that migration forced upon families: "With painful anxiety they saw one after another go from their care to return no more for protection &, as at the present day, they saw around them the floating shattered wreck of the blighted hopes of a thousand families. With what painful & eager anxiety they

¹⁰ Kaestle, 104-135; Pryor, "An Anomalous Person," pp. 363-366, 389-392.

¹¹ von Briesen, pp. 277, xv, 268-73, 7, n.11, 3-15; Thornbrough, p. xix-xxii.

watched each drifting fragment of their own household. In the doubtful uncertain struggle they saw one go down to come up no more, another barely keep his head above the agitated waves.”¹²

Impressions of Virginia as a middle-class teacher

When Elijah arrived in Alexandria, Virginia, in late July of 1810, he felt overcome by his tedious, arduous journey upon his little mare, which was “very poor, sorebacked and shabbed.” He did not continue his journey to Raleigh. When a tutor in the town offered to exchange his identical job position with a similar salary for Elijah’s, the latter readily agreed. Elijah taught fifteen male scholars who ranged in age between thirteen to twenty.¹³ He lived first in Alexandria for about a year and then he moved to New Glasgow in Amherst County, where he lived until 1819 when he settled in Lynchburg. He worked as a teacher until 1814.¹⁴ Throughout his fourteen years as a teacher, Elijah was positive, ambivalent and negative in his observations about the disparities between Virginia and Vermont.

¹² Gayle Thornbrough and Dorothy L. Riker, eds., The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Volume III 1844-1847: Including Letters To and From Calvin Fletcher (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1974), p. 247, n.30.

¹³ von Briesen, pp.7-19. According to Martha von Briesen, Elijah probably taught at the Alexandria Academy, which was incorporated in 1786. See p. 19, n.3.

¹⁴ von Briesen, pp. 86-89, 7-81. Martha von Briesen notes that Elijah’s first correspondence from Lynchburg was dated August 22, 1819 but on January 17, 1818 his name is recorded in Lynchburg’s Deed Book for a real estate matter. See p. 89, n. 1.

Elijah lived a life of leisure in the genteel household of General [Thomson] Mason, a planter and slaveowner.¹⁵ He enjoyed the plantocrats' extravagance, but he witnessed how their love for leisure and idleness led many to debauchery. Overall, Elijah enjoyed the plantocrat's luxurious household where he had two slaves to do his bidding. He relished an independence in Virginia which he had never experienced in Vermont, where his financial straits had induced his distress and isolation. "My inability and dependence made me miserable while with you," he informed his father, where "my enemies cared little for me and my friends distrusted me. They feared I was leading them into difficulty and running them in debt, but whether such things happen or not, time can only tell." Elijah reassured his father that his employment in Virginia was more gratifying, financially advantageous and pleasant than any job position he could have obtained in Vermont.¹⁶

Plantocrats' unruly offspring challenged plantation tutors, but teachers normally taught six to fifteen pupils. Elijah found this setup to be less stressful than teaching in northern public schools, which had thirty or more students per class. He had "to use industry and discretion to keep my school in proper order but the task is nothing so laborious as to teach a common school in Vermont."¹⁷ To his relief, Elijah found his Virginia scholars' conduct in academies manageable. While Elijah was President of New

¹⁵ Martha von Briesen believed the "Mason Family" was Thomson Mason and his wife Sarah McCarty Chichester and their nine children. See von Briesen, pp. 8, 9 n.4, 13, 15 n.2, 17, 19 n.3.

¹⁶ von Briesen, pp. 7-10, 15, 24, 28, quotation in Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 4, 1810, p. 7.

¹⁷ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 29, 1810, von Briesen, p. 15; *Richmond Enquirer*, December 31, 1835.

Glasgow Academy, for example, regulations compelled students to be diligent, respectful and obedient. A committee paid weekly visits to the academy, and if a scholar was insubordinate the council would “suspend, rusticate or expel” the unruly student as needed. The “scholars are as feared of these punishments,” Elijah noted, “for they are considered as disgraceful, as the scholars in New England would be at their colleges.”¹⁸

Distinctions between Virginians and Vermonters included concepts about roads, society and gatherings. For example, Elijah remarked upon landowners’ preferences for isolated plantations. “The inhabitants in these parts,” he observed, “do not consider it any privilege but a damage to have a road go through their farms. The planters will choose some elevated back spot for their dwelling where they never see any body except they go off the plantation or somebody comes on purpose to visit them.”¹⁹ General Mason’s household lived a life of wealth, extravagance and leisure where the young and old attended “novel and amusing” parties, horse-races, hunting events and barbecues which occurred regularly. These social gatherings, where the young and old fraternized on equal footing, honed young single men and women’s social skills. “The Virginian,” Elijah observed, “has certain open-hearted liberal sentiments, a certain noble spirit and social feeling, which distinguishes him from the Yankee or selfish, narrow, earthborn-souled Vermonter.”²⁰

¹⁸ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, June 9, 1811, von Briesen, p. 39.

¹⁹ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, October 1, 1810 and October 31, 1810, von Briesen, pp. 18, 20.

²⁰ von Briesen, pp. 8-21, quotation in Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 4, 1810 and October 1, 1810, von Briesen, pp. 8, 17.

The North and South shared similar customs during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the regions' conventions diverged during the nineteenth century. The North became more egalitarian and industrial and altered its customs accordingly while the agricultural South perpetuated its culture based upon an hierarchical slave society. Fluidity existed between old and new customs in the antebellum North, however, which maintained common strands between northern culture and southern customs.²¹

Antebellum Virginia men's identity and honor centered around their masculinity, pomp and bravado. Virginia gentry defined gentility and honor in much the same ways as their forefathers had done, which was through their bloodlines, refinement, geniality, education and piety. Antebellum northern men's perceptions of integrity, however, altered from how their ancestors defined honor. During the eighteenth century, for example, duels and lawful vices reinforced northern and southern men's image and manliness. By the antebellum period, however, northern proprieties changed while southern customs remained constant.²² In 1810, for example, Elijah noted the absurd, wasteful ways in which Virginia males defended their honor by resorting to duels: "I . . . saw a duel fought between two of our young Naval officers, occasioned by an altercation too trifling and boyish for rehearsal. The[y] marched to a place at little distance from the Navy yard accompanied by their seconds and after preparations, shot three times at each, but neither killed nor wounded nor hurt. The seconds then held a converse and amicably

²¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 19-24, 96-114, 366-401.

²² Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor, pp. 48, 89, 350-361, 364-370.

adjusted the disturbance. So these great men magnanimously left the field of glory without scar or wound.”²³

Antebellum northern middle-class men’s image and honor relied upon their industry and civic duty. “Honor in the antebellum North,” historian Wyatt-Brown states, “became akin to respectability, a word that included freedom from licit vices that once were signals of masculinity.” Northerners acquainted honor with wealth, Wyatt-Brown elucidates, “but only as a means to an end.” While living in Vermont, for example, Elijah’s honor was threatened. His financial dependence and the debts which he accrued as a student in the North caused his enemies to gloat and his friends to question his character. Vermont neighbors accused Elijah of being a selfish son and friend who burdened his family and associates. He left Vermont in mortification and poverty. In order to regain his honor, he asked his father to inform his neighbors of his professional and financial success in Virginia. Elijah also asserted that he had every intention to repay his debts.²⁴ He exclaimed, for example, that his brother Jesse could “tell that little narrow souled Hall that there is no danger of his losing the money due him on my account, for I am neither dead nor run away . . . I had not a face to scold much about it then for every one was almost as fearful to trust me as he was. I hope to God I never shall again be dependent upon them. I rejoice that I have left them and I should have done it if I had had to walk out of town on foot with no more than a fippenny bit in my pocket. I have everlasting thanks to give you for helping me all that lay in your power, as well that time

²³ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 4, 1810, von Briesen, p. 7.

²⁴ Wyatt-Brown, pp. 19-24, quotes on pp. 20-21; von Briesen, 10, 24, 28, 37.

as ever since I have been studying.”²⁵ Throughout his lifetime, Elijah repaid his father and family for their financial sacrifices by sending them generous sums of money to reduce his parents’ debts, to help educate his siblings, to aid his brothers out of debt and to purchase homes for his widowed sisters. For example, he sent \$100.00 from his first payment as a teacher in Alexandria to his parents in order to pay for his sister Lucy’s education.²⁶

Family networks and reciprocity were valued in both antebellum New England and Virginia, but differences existed between the ways southern gentry and middle-class Northerners valued these qualities. Bloodlines and heritage defined upper-class Virginians’ self-worth, and reciprocity and familial dependence perpetuated southern culture. In the antebellum North, on the other hand, a sense of bourgeois individualism emerged when northern sons and daughters sought their self-worth and respectability through job opportunities. The North’s industrial expansion caused home-based trades to dwindle and instigated Northerners to seek jobs in factories and businesses. Yankees valued kinship as much as Southerners, but there was a “sense of deep obligation in the South” towards familial reciprocal dependence within plantation societies. The Virginia gentry’s duty to offer familial or social assistance reinforced their family’s rank, familial pride and social stability. Elite antebellum Virginians and their children perceived their social positions as their rightful claims because of their bloodlines, familial prestige and inheritance. Familial devotion and gratitude between needy relations and Virginia’s elite

²⁵ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, Jr., December 7, 1810, von Briesen, p. 24.

²⁶ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, October 1, 1810, and August 2, 1829; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, July 14, 1837, and November 27, 1858, von Briesen, pp. 16, 19, 106-107, 150-151, 255-256.

were genuine, but an expectancy to receive one's due also existed.²⁷ After Elijah married into the wealthy, prestigious Crawford family, for example, he provided financial advice to his Virginia in-laws, administered their estates and purchased their properties after they had gone into debt. The contrast between Elijah's industrious, middle-class values and his in-laws' upper-class expectations of family networks magnified when the Crawford relatives sought Elijah's financial assistance after his wife had died. He informed his brother Calvin, for example, that "I occasionally get letters from my wife's connections but they are all asking favors, loans of money &c. Three weeks ago one for \$100, last week another application, for \$2,000. These things annoy me, as they are highly improper and unreasonable. So your purely friendly communications are welcomed with great pleasure . . . The others I dread to open, as they are from the lazy and unworthy, asking me to provide for their imprudence."²⁸

Antebellum Virginia's dire need for both teachers and industry provided unique advantages for transplanted middle-class Northerners to perpetuate reciprocity and family networks. The Fletcher family felt the impacts of both the gradual progression of bourgeois individualism and the lingering stability of familial reciprocity in rural antebellum Vermont. Over the next few decades, most of Jesse's adult children migrated to the West, South or other northern states to seek their fortunes, but at least one or two

²⁷ Wyatt-Brown, pp. 332-333, quotation on p. 332.

²⁸ Quotation in Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher July 28, 1854, von Briesen, p. 249. For additional references about Elijah's assistance to his in-laws see Elijah Fletcher to Mrs. Gabriella Page, December 1, 1845, April 19, 1847, October 10, 1850, and November 18, 1852, Elijah Fletcher Papers [hereafter cited as EFP], Mary Helen Cochran Library [hereafter cited as MHCL], Sweet Briar College [hereafter cited as SBC].

children remained in the Ludlow household to support their parents and supplement the family's financial needs. Amongst those who left Ludlow, Elijah, Timothy, Calvin and Stoughton supported siblings who had experienced personal and financial hardships. Elijah's desire to assist his family was as steadfast as his ambition to live a respectable, financially secure life. The extent of his deference to his parents and his impressive generosity towards his siblings rivaled, and perhaps even surpassed, the sense of duty felt by many elite Virginians. Elijah's sense of family duty and his magnanimous devotion to his family as a middle-class teacher was striking. In 1811, he had a teacher's salary of \$600 a year, which was more than he could have obtained in the North, but he felt "as poor and dependent as ever." As a teacher in Virginia, he did not always receive his wages on a quarterly basis and he usually received the bulk of his salary towards the end of the year. He complained "I frequently ask myself when I shall be independent and not dogged about and troubled for want of money." Between 1810 and 1812, however, Elijah sent approximately \$200-400 to his father and siblings each year despite his financial straits.²⁹

Reciprocal dependence existed in the Fletcher family, but instead of reinforcing his role as the benevolent donor to whom family was indebted, Elijah humbled himself and focused on the debt of gratitude he owed his poorer parents and siblings. Throughout his lifetime, Elijah expected no recompense from his parents and he rarely requested his

²⁹ von Briesen, pp. 277, 212, 115-116; for references about Elijah's financial straits and the money he sent to his family each year, see Elijah Fletcher to Jesse, Fletcher, April 20, 1810, August 4, 1810, October 31, 1810, February 22, 1811, December 23, 1811, and May 15, 1812, von Briesen, pp. 4, 7-8, 20-22, 29-30, 47-48, 54-55.

siblings to repay their debts.³⁰ Sensitive to his personal poverty and hardships, Jesse Fletcher oftentimes accused Elijah of being averse and boastful in providing financial assistance to him and the family.³¹ In response, Elijah emphasized his dependence upon, and debt to his father and family. In 1811, for example, he reassured his father, “What money I have goes as free as water, I value the dollars no more than chips . . . The paying the notes I gave you is nothing. I shall be as much your debtor then as ever. The debt of gratitude is different [from] all other debts, the more one tries to pay it the more he finds himself indebted.”³²

Elijah was generous and egalitarian in supporting his siblings and he believed that his brothers and sisters deserved equal educational opportunities. When his parents lacked the funds to educate Elijah’s sisters, Elijah paid for their tuition.³³ He asserted that education defined a person’s self-worth more so than did wealth or property. Property provided life’s creature comforts, he advised, but education honed a person’s potential and worth: “I always did and always shall prefer a person of Education, taste, refinement, virtue, honesty and industry to an ignoramus with a long purse, well stuffed. A man that has an education and prospects in a profession to make money has already a fortune.”³⁴

³⁰ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, July 4, 1839 and August 20, 1831; Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 22, 1819 and December 23, 1811, von Briesen, pp. 161-162, 124-125, 87-89, 47-48.

³¹ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, May 24, 1811, April 24, 1812 and February 7, 1813, von Briesen, pp. 37, 52, 71.

³² Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, May 24, 1811, von Briesen, p. 37.

³³ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, December 23, 1811 and May 15, 1812, von Briesen, pp. 47-48, 54-56.

³⁴ Elijah Fletcher to Lucy Fletcher, [November 6, 1812], von Briesen, p. 67.

Elijah had an egalitarian outlook about white men and women's familial duties when he advised his father to value and compensate his sons and daughters' industry equally. Jesse repaid his sons' labors with money, property or gifts, yet he accepted his daughters' provisions to the family without providing them with any regard or compensations. Elijah placed equal value for his siblings' labors when he remarked that his brother "Jesse has, to be sure, done well and deserves a recompense. But has he labored longer and more industriously than Fanny?"³⁵ Elijah was humble about his financial contributions to his father, but he respectfully challenged his father when Jesse failed to compensate for all of his children's needs and labors. When Elijah learned that Jesse had chastised his daughters for their neediness and vulnerability within the home and then later perpetuated their helpless situations by giving financial favors to his independent sons, Elijah passionately defended his sisters and remarked upon his father's failings:

But it is my disposition rather to assist the needy when I have but little to give. Jess is . . . very independent, thriving and getting rich . . . while my sisters situations are not quite so independent and agreeable as I could wish . . . and . . . poor Fanny, quite helpless, and an invalid, and who deserves the ever lasting gratitude . . . of her Father, mother, Brothers & Sisters for the labor & industry she used so many years to assist in raising numerous and troublesome Family, and whose labor alone in her Fathers family if properly charged & estimated would support her handsomely till she was three score years & ten, 'How long Fanny, shall I have to maintain you.' My principles may be wrong, but I think a Father is under obligations to support a Daughter whom he was the cause of bringing into this troublesome world . . .³⁶

³⁵ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 16, 1812, von Briesen, pp. 60-61.

³⁶ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 29, 1819, von Briesen, pp. 87-88.

Elijah viewed education, industry, honor and self-worth differently from antebellum elite Virginians. Southern elites identified prestige, natural rights, honor and success in terms of land ownership. Their sole focus on land possession and the hierarchical nature of a slave society limited the southern plantocrats' opportunities for respectable positions.³⁷ Landowners' sons were expected to carry on the tradition by entering "inherited occupations" such as medicine, law and the military as a means to subsidize the capricious nature of agricultural revenue, but they perpetuated the "economic shackles of tradition." Antebellum middle-class New Englanders' identities focused more upon a person's self-worth and accomplishments. Inherited professions existed in the North as well, but northern customs neither dictated middle-class Northerners' professions nor shackled them to prearranged futures. A person was judged more by his industry than by his familial ties.³⁸ Northern men relied upon family networks to obtain professional jobs, but they had a broader array of job opportunities, such as positions in internal improvements which included engineering, factory construction and management with railroads and canals.³⁹

Virginians' education, customs, culture and laws perpetuated an hierarchical, slave society where the southern gentry's power and security were guaranteed. Adult illiteracy in New England was under one percent, whereas at least 25 percent of all

³⁷ Wyatt-Brown, p. 190.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 5-6, 122-123.

³⁹ Ibid, 176-191.

southern whites were illiterate in 1850.⁴⁰ Many upper-class young men attended academies and colleges while many of Virginia's middle class attended denominational or subscription schools and academies. Middle class white Southerners had respectable professions, but they generally had better chances for upward mobility in the West or North.⁴¹ The lower middle class and poor whites attended old field schools neighborhood schools and subscription schools which offered rudimentary education. Occasionally, the state and benevolent societies provided funds to organize charity schools for the poor.⁴² Poor white Virginians' opportunities for education were a rarity and their chances for social mobility within their home state were nearly nonexistent. During the early nineteenth century, upper-class whites asserted that equality existed between whites of all classes, but the classes' natural rights were based according to their station. As an educated, egalitarian, middle-class New Englander, Elijah dismissed plantocrats' assertions of white equality as hypocrisy and in 1810 he observed poor whites' slave-like behavior towards the upper-class:

The rich man or man in honorable business can live respected and happy here but the poor and dependent must be miserable. Their is no country, I believe, where property is more unequally distributed than in Virginia. We can see here and there a stately palace or mansion house; while all around for many miles we behold no other but little smoaky huts and log cabins of poor, laborious, ignorant tenants. These tenants, when they approach their lord, must have their hat in hand and cringe, and bow, and tremble, like the meanest slave. In fact the are but very little above the blacks. It is no uncommon thing here for

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 193-194.

⁴¹ Kaestle, pp. 192-197.

⁴² Ibid, pp. 192-195.

men to be unable to read and write. The poor have no chance at all for an Education. This is their boasted liberty and Equality!⁴³

Antebellum Virginia's need for industry resulted from the pressures that an hierarchical society had upon its native residents. One of the most popular options for both southern middle and lower class whites was migration to a place where family connections mattered less, industry mattered more and where land was affordable and obtainable. There were many poor and middle-class white Virginians who possessed ambitions, spirit and industry, but they had better opportunities for upward mobility when they migrated from their home state. Virginia residents' massive migrations from their region left significant gaps, which, in turn, increased the region's acute need for enterprise. Scarcity in population and industry created beneficial openings for educated, industrious Northerners who migrated to Virginia. When Northerners and foreign immigrants settled in the South, they represented a significant amount of the region's teachers, journalists, merchants, editors and lawyers.⁴⁴ Northerners' reasons for leaving their home states may have been similar to those that motivated Southerners to seek their fortune elsewhere, but many Northerners had an advantage over Virginia's less affluent whites who remained in the South. For example, unlike their southern counterparts, middle-class northern tutors' bloodlines were insignificant in acquiring respectability and participating within the plantocrats' social circles.⁴⁵

⁴³ von Briesen, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Wyatt-Brown, 176-191.

⁴⁵ Richard M. Bernard and Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Antebellum Massachusetts," *Journal of Social History* 10 (March 1977), pp. 333-35.

The relationship between southern landowners and their tutors was unique, because the plantocrats treated the tutor more as a guest than as a servant or as an employee. The southern gentry respected teachers for their education and knowledge. Elijah assured his father, for example, that his “employment is respectable and I consider my standing upon par and equality with most of the people.”⁴⁶ In accordance with the southern philosophy of education, the tutor imparted the tools and knowledge which opened the doors to a “godly life” of renown and authority. A tutor’s college education, which either equaled or excelled his employer’s education, made his social standing of little or no consequence to the landowner and his family. Due to the shortage of teachers, the random practice of hiring educators, and the impermanent contracts between teachers and landowners, plantocrats regarded a potential tutor’s background as irrelevant. Even some southern tutors with modest backgrounds were treated as equals within the plantation household. When William Gordon McCabe, a southern tutor, left the employ of John Selden, a Virginia slaveowner, the latter wrote that the teacher was a “young man of extraordinary capacity, a hard student, strictly attentive to his duties, conscientious and moral, beyond anyone of his age I have ever known.”⁴⁷

Southern families cared for the teachers when the latter were sick, named their children after them, mended their clothes, and lent them money and clothes. In some cases, the tutor looked after the plantation when the master and mistress were absent for an extended period. If a teacher died while in the employ of the southern family, he was

⁴⁶ von Briesen, p.8.

⁴⁷ Pryor, pp. 370-376, quotation on p. 372.

buried in the family's cemetery. Elijah got along very well with General Mason, "a man of note and respectability," and his family. Elijah stated "I use as much freedom in the family as I did at my father's house. I doubt not of their kindness to me in health or sickness."⁴⁸ On rare occasions, tutors married within their employer's family and were welcomed with open arms. Elijah Fletcher was among those who rose "above his station" by marrying into one of the most wealthiest and respected families in Amherst County.⁴⁹

As an highly educated, transplanted New Englander, Elijah had an advantage over white middle-class Virginians. He saw the promise for upward mobility in Virginia and he communicated his excitement: "I now view future prospects with a smile. I have launched my leaky barge upon the variously undulating ocean of the world." He believed that the fruition of his goals could be obtained by living in Virginia and all that was required was his education, industry and ambition: "There is scarce any object but we can obtain by proper exertion, and prudent means. I have an ambition to make myself respectable. I am sensible I possess no extraordinary gift or talent, and to gratify my ambition nothing will do but industry, labor, and the practice of virtue."⁵⁰

Historian Elizabeth Brown Pryor asserts that the southern gentry's emphasis upon hereditary rank was not as rigid as many scholars of southern history have assumed. Pryor

⁴⁸ von Briesen, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Pryor, pp. 370-376.

⁵⁰ Quotations in Elijah Fletcher to [Jesse Fletcher] October 31, 1810 and January 11, 1811, von Briesen, pp. 21, 25.

states that southern plantocrats had welcomed the northern tutor within their social circles despite the latter's modest background. The southern elite, Pryor argues, regarded a person's deportment, education and industry as highly as they regarded his social station. For this reason, they found the teachers' backgrounds to be irrelevant. Pryor further asserts that the South's "frontier atmosphere" improved northern teachers' opportunities to enhance their social status and join the South's upper-class.⁵¹ To reinforce her argument, Pryor notes that the tutor and the overseer had common backgrounds and similar salaries, but the overseer led a life of forced isolation. Overseers were prohibited from fraternizing with the slaves, and they were socially banished from the owner's home and social circles. The southern elite treated the overseer as an inferior hireling with a contemptible job. Unlike the tutor, the overseer's interaction with, and control over, the slaves infringed upon the slaveowner's authority.⁵² There are discrepancies in Pryor's argument that Northerners' deportment, education and industry alone instigated their social mobility in Virginia. There were poor literate whites who never rose above their stations and there were wealthy southern whites who never descended from their ranks because of their illiteracy. Anna Howe, a New England teacher who taught a plantation school in Cumberland County, Virginia, observed that many wealthy and poor residents were illiterate. She revealed that a white Southerner's schooling had little or no impact upon his social status. One of her students, for example, was an overseer's beautiful daughter who was studying to become a teacher since her impoverished background made

⁵¹ Pryor, pp. 374-377.

⁵² Ibid, pp. 374-377.

an advantageous marriage unlikely. Within the same classroom were two students whose father, though illiterate, was very wealthy.⁵³ Despite her education, the overseer's daughter most likely never obtained the autonomy or social mobility that northern teachers like Anna and Emily Howe gained.

Pryor's contrast between northern teachers' temporary social standing and the overseers' permanent status weakens her argument. By welcoming a transient northern teacher into their social circles, the southern elite temporarily bent (and did not permanently alter) their notions of rank. Elijah Fletcher and Emily Howe Dupuy married into Virginia's upper-class society despite their northern, middle-class status. After their respective marriages, however, Elijah and Emily maintained Virginia's hierarchical, slave society. A minority of Northerners who had permanently lived in Virginia may have chipped the mold on "conventional notions of hereditary class" in Virginia, but their new status neither altered nor broke the upper-class Southerners' concepts of rank and hereditary power. Elijah's success as a slaveowner verified Pryor's argument but only to a point because Elijah and other Northerners who prospered in Virginia were the minority.

Northerners benefited from Piedmont Virginia's frontier because the region focused primarily upon agricultural wealth and perpetuated the Southside's stagnation in industry, education and career opportunities. Elijah asserted that Virginia's retrogressive culture offered enterprise and wealth to New Englanders who worked in education,

⁵³ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Ann Skinner, May 8, 1848, EDP.

religion, medicine, manufacturing and mechanics.⁵⁴ Although there were many academies in the South, the students' curricula were not of equal caliber as were students' studies in the North. In 1837, for example, Sidney Fletcher, Elijah's eldest child, stated that there were "a few students that come on well prepared from The South, they generally prepare a year in [New Haven Connecticut] and I know from my own experience that a young man can not be well prepared for a thorough course through a Northern College in a Southern school. In the South they get only a smattering of what they learn."⁵⁵ Piedmont Virginia was a frontier which rarely provided breakthroughs for native middle-class citizens and much less for lower class residents. The region possessed barriers and lacked certain freedoms which only a minority of industrious Virginians could break through to reap the benefits. Anna Howe stated that Northerners' enterprise and industry were significantly advantageous for upward mobility in the South rather than in the North. The fierce competitiveness found in the North was nonexistent in the South. The main reasons for this, Anna explained, were the elite's valuation of leisure, their disdain for work and the lower classes' handicaps in rising above their station. Virginia gentry possessed the education to compete with northern teachers who taught in the South, but their upper-class rank's dictates centered around leisure. "One comparison I will make between this place & the north," Anna stated, "[i]f a person whatever may be their business comes to the place, and is industrious & capable he soon

⁵⁴ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, November [29, 1811], von Briesen, p.45.

⁵⁵ Sidney Fletcher first went to a private school led by Reverend Nicholas Cobbs near Lynchburg. He then attended a Classical school in New Haven, Connecticut led by Edward L. Hart. Quotation in Sidney Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, June, 1837, von Briesen, pp. 148-149; see also Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, November 2, 1836, von Briesen, pp. 144-145, 145, n.1.

gets into business, grows rich, and excites no envy. All continue to patronize him as before, whereas one at the north in the same circumstances, has a thousand competitors all trying to outdo him, or other ways preventing his success through their envy . . . As for myself, although I have a prosperous business, I have no rivals neither do I believe I am at all envied.”⁵⁶ Education and industry placed Northerners at an advantage to lead respectable, prosperous lives in the South, but they did so only because they did not breach Virginia gentry’s notions of hierarchical power and control. Upper-class Virginians reaped the benefits of Northerners’ industry and education in strengthening the state’s economy and maintaining their power. Southside Virginia’s gentry protected and reinforced their control by not democratizing the region, by not educating the majority of their residents and by not advancing industrialism.

With little or no chances for a decent education or upward mobility, many poor Virginia whites’ destitute conditions were further exacerbated by competitions with slaves and free blacks for skilled labor jobs. Although Virginia gentry claimed that slavery and skin color verified all white men’s superiority, the privileged classes perpetuated the lower classes’ status by endorsing black labor over white. Oftentimes poor whites reacted to their destitute, abject conditions by taking vengeance upon the race who could not strike back. The slaves, Elijah remarked, “think as meanly of the poor white people, as the rich white people do themselves and think any body that is so poor as to be an overseer mean enough.” During his first decade in Virginia, Elijah pitied the

⁵⁶ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, EDP.

slaves' condition and maltreatment, but he became increasingly ambivalent about slavery. Elijah's egalitarianism for his own race did not extend to the slaves.⁵⁷

Land ownership and slavery were the dominant means by which Virginia gentry reaped the benefits of honor, power, prominence and independence. During his brief residence in Alexandria, Elijah elucidated the slaveowners' inhumanity towards bondsmen. The "Negro, who reaps no fruit for his labor" Elijah observed, was deemed, purchased and sold as cattle, but slaveowners treated their bondsmen worse than they treated their livestock.⁵⁸ Owners provided insufficient amounts of food and clothing to their slaves who labored from sunrise to sunset under the white overseer's cruel, watchful supervision.⁵⁹ Most slaveowners did not encourage religion amongst their slaves and Elijah found many plantocrats and slaves "ignorant and careless" about the topic. Samuel Huntington Perkins, a New England teacher in North Carolina, discussed religion with the slaves in 1817, for example, and he stated the slaves "all suppose at death they shall return to their own country. And one instance has occurred of a negro's providing tobacco and all the necessities for a journey to Guinea and then hanging himself as the only means of returning to his home."⁶⁰ Plantocrats tied and whipped their slaves over the slightest inconveniences, such as being tardy about preparing and laying out the meals

⁵⁷ von Briesen, p. 23.

⁵⁸ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 4, 1810, von Briesen, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, October 1, 1810, *ibid*, pp. 16-19.

⁶⁰ Robert C. McLean, "A Yankee Tutor in the Old South," *North Carolina Historical Review* XLVII (1) (January 1970), p. 64.

on the table.⁶¹ Masters scrutinized their slaves' words and actions closely and even the most harmless conduct was treated as a direct offense to whites' pride and security. On his way to run errands, for example, a slave spontaneously caught Elijah's mare in a pasture and, with a slave boy for company, he rode the mare to his destination. When the two slaves returned, General Mason's men "first tied up the boy and whipt him about a quarter of an hour, and he was begging and praying, yelling to a terrible rate. They then took the man, and I will assure you, they shew him no mercy. The more he cried and begged pardon, the more they whipt and in fact I thought they would have killed the poor creature."⁶² When Samuel Perkins confronted a slaveowner in 1817 about slaves' brutal treatment, the latter "urged in extenuation, that the law did not allow him to free them; and that it was necessary to use them harshly, else they become indolent, insolent, & ungovernable. Necessity! A standard, round which villains, robbers, and assassins always rally."⁶³

Elijah gradually became more critical and contemptuous of slaves' depravity. He voiced his repugnance towards slavery and the depravity of its victims. His observations fluctuated between sympathy and insight to contempt and disgust for those who suffered under the slaveowners' oppressive, brutal control. In one instance, for example, Elijah described slaves as ugly thieves, indolent tricksters and cunning runaways. He later observed that the "people are always complaining how ugly, unfaithful, and stealing their

⁶¹ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, October 31, 1810, von Briesen, p. 20.

⁶² Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 29, 1810, *ibid*, p. 14.

⁶³ McLean, "A Yankee Tutor in the Old South," p. 60.

slaves are. It is all very true, but who can blame the poor degraded objects? A person that is kept in such a state that he can have no ambition, nothing but the whip to encourage him, no sense of shame or honor, we can expect no more from.”⁶⁴ In August of 1810, he expressed his abhorrence that Southerners treated the slaves like cattle, but by December of that same year, Elijah adopted the owners’ perceptions of slaves as breeding, laboring beasts. Owners encouraged their slaves to have children, and many slave girls became pregnant when they were about thirteen years old. Elijah stated slaves “pretend to have wives and husbands” and he described a slave’s marriage ceremony as “little more ceremony . . . than the cattle do. They lay all together on the floor like hogs, have no beds . . . they will have as many children as a bitch will puppies.”⁶⁵ Ralph Roberts, an ex-slave challenged whites’ censure of slaves’ infidelities when he stated “this utter contempt of the whites for the sacredness of marriage amongst slaves, had done more to demoralize and brutalize the slave than all the other personal wrongs he suffers . . . The *sentiment* that should exist in marriage, is excluded or crushed by the necessity of their condition; and the tie becomes a mere liaison, founded upon the instinct of the brute.”⁶⁶ Elijah’s contradictory feelings of contempt and sympathy for the slaves mirrored those generally felt by Northerners for blacks. Harriet Beecher Stowe elucidated New Englanders’ struggle to reconcile their egalitarian, benevolent feelings with their racism when one of her white, southern characters in Uncle Tom’s Cabin told a

⁶⁴ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, December 7, 1810 and January 11, 1811, von Briesen, pp. 23-26.

⁶⁵ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 29, 1810 and December 7, 1810, *ibid*, pp. 14, 23-24.

⁶⁶ Maurice Duke, ed., Don’t Carry Me Back!: Narratives by Former Virginia Slaves (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1995), p. 91.

visitor from Vermont “You loathe them as you would a snake or a toad, yet you are indignant at their wrongs. You would not have them abused; but you don’t want to have anything to do with them yourselves. You would send them to Africa, out of your sight and smell.”⁶⁷

Elijah’s father expressed his concerns for the slaves’ welfare and asserted his hopes that Elijah would do all he could to “relieve and assist the slave in distress.” In January of 1811, Elijah voiced his powerlessness as an employee and as an outsider to alleviate the slaves’ misery. “I assure you it is a task I would do with pleasure, if I could with profit. But to vindicate the rights of that degraded class of human creatures here would render me quite unpopular.” He was compassionate towards the slaves and did all he could to spare their punishment. If a domestic slave destroyed the owners’ commodities, for example, the slaveowner would either whip them or demand compensation from the slave. Many times when General Mason’s slaves requested Elijah’s financial assistance to pay for the damaged goods, Elijah gave them money. Whether they performed their duties efficiently or poorly, slaves received the same “reward” through reprimands, threats and torture. Slaves were so accustomed to this treatment, Elijah observed, they were immune to censure. He found that bondsmen valued Elijah’s “condescension” when he praised them. He advised slaves to prevent further violence by accepting their servility with compliance because, he lectured them, “we are all slaves some way or other and that they are as well off as though free, but I can

⁶⁷ Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. xii-xiv; quotation in Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852; New York: New American Library, 1966), p. 195.

hardly make them believe this lesson.”⁶⁸ Austin Steward, an ex-slave, repudiated that no “slave could possibly escape being punished - I care not how attentive they might be, nor how industrious - punished they must be, and punished they certainly were.”⁶⁹

Elijah sanctioned slaves’ rights for humane treatment, but he did not oppose slavery’s ban on slaves’ freedom; nor did he question the institution’s refusal to financially compensate the slaves for their labor. Slaves received minuscule allowances for laboring in the fields under the lash from sunrise to sunset. Since they lacked incentives to prosper from their labor, Elijah observed, the slaves were indolent about reaping the crops and they were indifferent about nurturing the soil. Although he knew that wages and land ownership stimulated laborers’ productivity, Elijah’s solution to improve Virginia’s industry was not to free and pay the slaves for their labor. He blamed slaves’ indolence partly on the degradation of slavery but he also blamed blacks for being naturally lazy. Virginia’s solution, he asserted, was slaves’ exportation from the country. “For a while the loss of the blacks might be felt in these States; but I verily believe it would be the inhabitants greatest blessing to get rid of them. I am sensible they are really unprofitable. Four white servants, that had their daily wages, would be worth and do more than twenty common blacks, who are so lazy as to do nothing without being drove to it.” His solution for a white South was reminiscent of those espoused by many white New Englanders and white authors who sought to whiten America. In Uncle Tom’s Cabin, for example, George, a slave, exclaimed “The desire and yearning of my soul is

⁶⁸ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, January 11, 1811, von Briesen, pp. 25-26.

⁶⁹ Duke, Don’t Carry Me Back!, p. 37.

for an African *nationality*. I want a people that shall have a tangible, separate existence of its own.”⁷⁰

When Vermont prohibited slavery in 1777, slaves were not as prevalent in the state as they were in the rest of New England. Historian Joanne Melish observed that slavery in Vermont “had never officially existed (although slaves had undoubtedly been held there),” but in Vermont, as throughout New England, distinctions between racial citizenship sharpened during emancipation. During the late eighteenth century and well into the early antebellum period, white Northerners witnessed many newly emancipated slaves sink into indolence, dissipation, and duplicity. When New England whites attempted to manage emancipated slaves and make them more compliant, obedient, and dependent, free blacks resisted. During the early 1800’s most white Americans perceived blacks “as a permanently alien and unassimilable element of the population.” They could not reconcile their concepts of blacks’ “innate moral and intellectual inferiority” with whites’ egalitarian views of liberty, citizenship and equality. Most white antebellum Northerners agreed that slavery perpetuated the problem of blacks’ occupancy in their country and many New England whites assumed that gradual emancipation and colonization would cause “the problem” of blacks’ presence to ultimately vanish.⁷¹

Elijah envisioned a similar future for Virginia and her white citizens.

⁷⁰ Quotation in Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, January 11, 1811, von Briesen, pp. 25-26; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, pp. 459-462, quote on p. 460.

⁷¹ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 345, 542-569; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, pp. 40-41, quotation on p. 40; George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), pp. 1-21, quotation on p. 1.

Virginia's industry and productivity would improve, Elijah stated, if the lands were equally distributed among all whites and if white laborers replaced blacks. The region's internal improvements and manufacturing were inferior to those of New England. One of slavery's greatest evils, he asserted, was its' obstruction of white laborers' chances to gain employment and social mobility. Most poor whites were illiterate and lacked the resources to improve their condition. They could not vote nor hold office since slaveowners controlled the general assembly and county courts. When slaveowners hired white laborers, they paid petty wages and complained that their skilled slaves performed better. Elijah admitted that "while this is the case, the poor whites, unwilling to consider themselves upon a level with the negroes, live in idleness and poverty and practice their attendant vices . . . Happy, thrice happy are the poor people of New England when compared to that class here."⁷²

As a middle-class teacher, Elijah criticized Virginia elite's oppressive control over all classes and their brutal treatment of slaves. When he joined the ranks of upper-class Virginians, however, Elijah altered many of his views about poor whites and slavery while some of his convictions remained the same. When he died in 1858, Elijah was one of the largest slaveowners in Amherst County and Lynchburg. This chapter examines how Elijah's views on antebellum Virginia's hierarchical slave society altered.

Life & Impressions as a Piedmont Slaveowner

In May of 1811, Elijah became President of New Glasgow Academy in New Glasgow, Amherst County, a post-village with approximately 200 residents. He resigned from the position in 1814. In April of 1813, he married Maria Antoinette Crawford, the daughter of William Sidney Crawford, a wealthy slaveowner and lawyer.⁷³ By 1813, Elijah and Maria acquired some land, real estate and slaves. When Maria's father died intestate in 1815, Elijah administered his father-in-law's estate, which included about seven plantations, three of which were leased. Elijah proved his mettle, business acumen and farm management skills when he managed his father-in-law's estate, whose debt and credit transactions were "much deranged and unsettled."⁷⁴ By 1819, he and Maria resided in Lynchburg. As payment for debts, he had acquired a great deal of land and slaves. As Elijah acquired more plantations, one of which was 20 miles from Lynchburg, he visited each property for a day or two but left most of the slave management in the hands of his overseers.⁷⁵ His business ventures included loaning money to people,

⁷² Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, January 11, 1811, von Briesen, pp. 25-26.

⁷³ In addition to teaching boys at the Academy, Elijah also taught girls French in 1812. See von Briesen, 34, n. 3, 72, 73, n.1, 74, 75, n.1, 56, 61.

⁷⁴ William Crawford died February 19, 1815. As payment for handling Crawford's estate, Elijah received approximately \$1,390. See von Briesen, p. 84, n. 1, 284; Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, July 4, 1815 and August 31, 1815, *ibid*, pp. 83-86.

⁷⁵ In 1818, Elijah purchased real estate in Lynchburg. In 1824 he purchased approximately 1,300 and a half acres which his wife, Maria, named Sweetbrier and in 1830 he bought about 900 acres of land in Amherst County, which was about nine miles from his Lynchburg home. Their daughter, Indiana Fletcher Williams renamed the plantation Sweet Briar and in 1900 bequeathed the land to create Sweet Briar College in

building silk farms, grist mills and saw mills and in 1825 he purchased the *Virginian* (Lynchburg), which he co-owned with Richard Toler.⁷⁶ Elijah's civic career began in 1828 when he served on the town council and he then served as the mayor for one-year terms in 1831 and 1836. During these nine years, when he served as a civic leader, his town and the state of Virginia underwent exceptional change and turmoil.⁷⁷ He lived in a region that perpetuated Virginia's economic dependence upon agriculture and slavery, but he also lived in an area noted for its industry and internal improvements. In Amherst County, Elijah's business acumen, "perseverance and ambition" bore profits and his haven in Lynchburg proved to be his land of opportunity. Although he contained egalitarian views about men and women's education and familial roles, he perpetuated upper-class Virginians' hierarchical culture. His success as a plantation owner arose from his enterprise, his assimilation to Virginia elite's conservatism and his adaptation to slave society.

memory of her daughter, Daisy. In 1837 Elijah bought Tusculum, the Crawford estate, from W.S. Crawford, Jr. He also bought other properties from Maria's family in 1824, 1827 and 1842. See Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, August 22, 1819 and November 14, 1824; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, July 14, 1837; Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, July 23, 1825; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, March 29, 1831; Elijah Fletcher to Indiana Fletcher, October 16, 1841, von Briesen, pp. 87-88, 92-93, 96-97, 122-123, 150-151, 172-173, 173, n. 2; see also deed of agreement between Sidney Fletcher and Indiana Fletcher [1858-1862?] in which Sidney restored Sweetbrier plantation, its slaves, stock, house, etc., to Indiana, in Indiana Fletcher Williams Papers, [hereafter cited as IFWP] Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library [hereafter cited as RBMSCL], Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

⁷⁶ Fletcher and Toler renamed the newspaper *Lynchburg Virginian* in 1827. Elijah retired as the newspaper's owner/publisher in 1841; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher January 10, 1843; Elijah Fletcher to [Fletcher children], August 22, 1846, von Briesen, pp. 96-97, 97, n.3, 285, 288, 184, 201-03.

⁷⁷ Elijah was elected to the town council in 1828-1830. He served as the magistrate in 1829 and the recorder in 1830. See *Lynchburg Virginian*, April 9, 1829; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, November 12, 1832, von Briesen, pp. 129-130, 130, n.1.

Lynchburg, established in 1786 near the Blue Ridge Mountains in the upper James River Valley, was a town of invention and industry that heavily depended upon East Virginia's major crop -- tobacco. The town's progress, prosperity and ambition depended upon transportation via the James River since the town inspected, manufactured, traded and shipped tobacco. Competition with the North and West instigated the town's interest to initiate transportation between, and trade with, the Valley and Trans-Allegheny regions. By consolidating eastern and western Virginia, the state could expand and safeguard commerce between the two regions. Lynchburg residents envisioned the James River and Kanawha Canal as a means to connect the two regions, but funding for the project became a source of controversy between the state, joint-stock companies and citizens; so, progress was painfully slow.⁷⁸ By 1840, fifty-five years after the joint-stock owned James River Company was first created, the canal extended to Lynchburg and by 1851 the canal reached Botetourt County.⁷⁹

Success in internal improvements in antebellum Virginia depended upon a town's initiative because localities were responsible for their progress and expansion. Regions were required by law to establish, fund and bring the projects to fruition. Lynchburg citizens prided themselves on their industry and wealthy merchants had supported internal improvements ever since the early 1800's. The 1817 charter for the Lynchburg

⁷⁸ Lynchburg became a town in 1805 and incorporated as a city in 1852. See Emily J. Salmon and Edward D.C. Campbell, eds. The Hornbook of Virginia History: A Ready-Reference Guide to the Old Dominion's People, Places and Past 4th ed. (Richmond Virginia, Library of Virginia, 1994), p. 192; Thomas Field Armstrong, "Urban Vision in Virginia: A Comparative Study of Ante-Bellum Fredericksburg, Lynchburg, and Staunton" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1974), 58-61, 113.

⁷⁹ The James River Canal project changed hands several times, going back and forth from a joint-stock company to a state owned public enterprise. See Armstrong, "Urban Vision in Virginia," 58-61, 113.

and Salem Turnpike, for example, improved access to the Valley. The town's support for internal improvements consolidated, however, in 1831.⁸⁰ Routes between eastern, central and northern Virginia progressed, but transportation to the west and southwest regions lagged. Lynchburg residents' ire over both the state's irresolution and the James River Company's inertia to connect eastern and western Virginia instigated the town's resolve to come up with alternative modes of travel. The North and South's construction of railroads and canals inspired and intensified the town's competitive industry. In July of 1831, Elijah, the mayor, summoned a town meeting in which residents supported the construction of the Lynchburg and New River Railroad. When the canal to Lynchburg was completed, the town reasoned, they could transfer supplies via the railroad west to the falls of Kanawha River, which would guarantee the town's prosperity. Citizens requested the town council's donation of 1,000 shares to the railroad company. The council was skeptical about the legality of contributing towards a railroad, but with legislative consent, the council did so. Some townsmen who promoted the railroads, viewed the canal as detrimental to their plans, so they attempted to squash residents' support for the canal. Via the *Lynchburg Virginian*, Fletcher and Toler counteracted attacks against the canal's extension to Lynchburg. Railroad supporters would do better to prevent the canal's completion beyond Lynchburg, the editors suggested, since the two projects supplemented each other. In October of 1831, two months following Nat Turner's revolt, Fletcher and Toler further promoted internal improvements as a means to ensure the white population's safety. They concluded, for example, that the improvement

⁸⁰ Armstrong, pp. 61-64, 122-146.

of roads and canals “afford to the march of troops, and transportation of munitions of war in cases of invasion or insurrection.” Lynchburg’s residents and council supported the canal by a marginal vote. This decision proved beneficial because the railroad undertaking failed. This event was significant, however, because the town council continued to financially support internal improvements throughout the antebellum period. The combination of private campaigns, the council’s financial assistance and state aid made success more attainable.⁸¹ Besides the town’s support for the canal and the Lynchburg and Salem Turnpike, for example, Lynchburg sponsored at least six additional internal improvement projects to connect the eastern and western regions via turnpikes and railroads and three of those projects succeeded.⁸²

Fletcher and Toler’s *Lynchburg Virginian* served as the town’s “conscience” in encouraging reform. Richard Toler served more as the newspaper’s direct voice as the editor while Elijah handled the business side of the newspaper, but both men shared common interests. Also, many of the editors’ comments echoed views privately espoused

⁸¹ Virginia’s legislature vetoed the railroad’s construction in 1832 because they did not approve of the state’s responsibility for two-fifths of the stock. After receiving persistent demands, however, the legislature reinstated the James River and Kanawha Canal Company as a joint-stock company. See Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, March 7, 1836, von Briesen, pp. 138-139; *Lynchburg Virginian*, March 3, 1831, February 24, 1831, April 11, 1831 and September 29, 1831; quotation in *Lynchburg Virginian*, October 10, 1831; *Lynchburg Virginian*, October 13, 1834, November 13, 1834, January 8, 1835, January 29, 1835 and October 19, 1835; W. Ashbury Christian, *Lynchburg and its People* (Lynchburg: J.P. Bell Company, Printers, 1900), pp. 110-117; Armstrong, pp. 129-141.

⁸² The eight Lynchburg-sponsored internal improvements included: Lynchburg and Salem Turnpike, Lynchburg and Buckingham Turnpike (not made), James River and Kanawha Canal (reached Lynchburg, 1841), Lynchburg and Covington Turnpike (not made), Lynchburg and New River Railroad (not made), Virginia and Tennessee Railroad (1850-56), Orange and Alexandria Railroad (1860), Southside Railroad (from Petersburg). Armstrong, “Urban Vision in Virginia,” pp. 127-155; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, von Briesen, pp. 138-139.

by Elijah.⁸³ The paper was influential in instigating the town's people to demand changes. Three controversial issues during Elijah's civic tenure were the town's water works, the ill-equipped, incompetent volunteer fire department, and the small police. Terror about insurrections spread throughout Virginia after August of 1831 when Nat Turner and his insurgents massacred fifty-five whites, most of whom were women and children. Lynchburg citizens demanded the council to expand the police force. Since the 1820's, Lynchburg typically had only one designated police officer. Residents also requested that a bell be installed to enforce a curfew on all blacks, a measure that required blacks to be off the streets after eight or nine o'clock unless slaves carried permission slips from their owners. Notably, Lynchburg's council in 1831, while Elijah was mayor, did not enforce a curfew on blacks, nor did they increase the police department. It was not until the 1850's that blacks' curfews were enforced, a bell was installed to enact the curfew and the police department was expanded with salaried officers. The officers kept a night watch "to examine all kitchens & other houses occupied by slaves, . . . to apprehend all suspicious, riotous, idle and disorderly persons or negroes loitering in or strolling about such places . . . and to take all such to the cage."⁸⁴

After a tavern fire erupted in 1824, Fletcher and Toler spent the next thirteen years urging the town council to better equip their volunteer fire department and to improve the

⁸³ Both Toler and Fletcher were members of the Lynchburg Auxiliary Colonization Society and both served on the Internal Improvements committee. Elijah was a member of the Central Agricultural Society and he was a trustee for the Lynchburg Female academy. See *Lynchburg Virginian*, January 1, 1835, January 8, 1835, April 7, 1836 and April 11, 1836; Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, July 23, 1825; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, April 8, 1834, von Briesen, pp. 96-97, 135-36.

⁸⁴ Armstrong, pp. 259-265, quotation on p. 264.

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⁸³ Both Toler and Fletcher were members of the Lynchburg Auxiliary Colonization Society and both served on the Internal Improvements committee. Elijah was a member of the Central Agricultural Society and he was a trustee for the Lynchburg Female academy. See *Lynchburg Virginian*, January 1, 1835, January 8, 1835, April 7, 1836 and April 11, 1836; Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, July 23, 1825; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, April 8, 1834, von Briesen, pp. 96-97, 135-36.

⁸⁴ Armstrong, pp. 259-265, quotation on p. 264.

department's organizational response to fires. "If Bank Square had been laid in ashes last Monday night," the editors fumed, "an efficient Company would probably have been formed on Tuesday - But we escaped that calamity, although the escape was miraculously narrow, we are content to go on as we did before, without profiting by the warning." In 1827 the town council approved funds for an ambitious plan to provide an urban water supply for the town. For several decades, Lynchburg's water supply, which relied upon a few wells and a spring, supplemented by inadequate, antiquated reservoirs, endangered people's health and heightened fire hazards. Albert Stein, who became famous as a public water works engineer, visited Lynchburg and informed the town council that the residents could use the James River as their water supply. Due to the town's high elevation above the James River, Stein observed, the town needed to install a pumping system that pumped the water 245 feet from the river into a man-made 800,000 gallon reservoir, which would then disperse water throughout the town. Since the estimated cost was \$35,000 the council wisely sought the town people's input. Many fumed about paying exorbitant amounts of money for an ambitious, extraordinary project that would likely fail, but they acknowledged their acute need for water supply. While conceding the exorbitant cost, Fletcher and Toler supported the endeavor by observing that by not supporting the project, the town would triple their liability due to fire risks. The council made the singular decision to finance the project solely through public funds and they created a Water Works Committee, on which Elijah served. The committee obtained a \$40,000 loan, the capital of which was due after 1850. By 1829, the Water Works construction was completed and it "consisted of a dam across one branch of the James

River and a canal from the resulting pool to the pump house. A water wheel in the pump house moved a double-forcing pump which propelled the water 232 feet through pipes up a hill to the reservoir . . . there was sufficient gravity flow for the water to be distributed throughout the town.” Tensions over the project intensified over the two year span and when the day came to test the pumps and reservoir, a mob threatened to hang the committee members if the project failed. Not only was the Water Works a magnificent success, but the project actually paid off its own debts. Since the canal went through the dam, the town gave exclusive rights to the James River and Kanawha Canal Company during the 1830’s on the condition that Lynchburg received water “at the rate of 30 gallons per diem for each inhabitant.” The revenue obtained through the Water Works not only paid off the project’s interest and paid the superintendent’s salary but the company also used the surplus to settle their other debts.⁸⁵

In 1831 the public raved about the huge success of the public water works. In March of that same year, the newspaper praised the accomplishments of the fire engineer who extinguished the fire by using the water from the reservoir. The editors censured the incompetence of the volunteers, however, who had deserted their posts. An editorial in the mid 1830’s suggested the town council hire salaried wardens who would both manage the fire department and train volunteers. By 1836, when Elijah was elected mayor, the town council hired salaried wardens for the fire department, and the council bestowed the wardens with “broad emergency police powers.” The editors of the *Lynchburg Virginian* lauded all three projects after the fire department wardens successfully managed the

⁸⁵ Armstrong, pp. 289-296; Christian, Lynchburg and its People, pp. 93-99; *Lynchburg Virginian*, April 8,

crowds while their volunteers put out the next fire using the water from the public Water Works. After serving as mayor, Elijah was exhausted. He acknowledged he had a citizen's duty to serve the public, but he had "no taste for public life. When it comes to me it is shoved upon me, not sought. My disposition is for retirement."⁸⁶

Elijah's success as a plantation owner arose from his business acumen and enterprise, his assimilation to Virginia elite's conservatism and his adaptation to an hierarchical slave society. Elijah was complex in that he assimilated to a culture which contradicted some of his basic beliefs. He had republican notions about men's and women's education and he had egalitarian concepts about family networks. He believed all white men should have the right to vote and that they should have equal opportunities to better their social standing. As a civic leader, he served on committees to build schools and churches and to improve Lynchburg's industry. As owners of a Whig newspaper, he and Richard Toler provided information about agricultural developments, advocated internal improvements, supported colonization and recommended humane reform. However, Elijah was no active reformer on the two major issues he had condemned when he was a middle-class teacher - poor whites' natural rights and slavery. Although he supported colonization, he did not free any of his slaves. Although he condemned the lower classes' oppression, he reinforced their hardships by perpetuating an hierarchical, slave society. He had liberal views about industry and internal improvements, but

1830, March 21, 1831 and March 17, 1831.

⁸⁶ Armstrong, pp. 245-252; *Lynchburg Virginian*, March 21, 1831 and March 17, 1831; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, March 27, 1832, von Briesen, p. 129.

throughout his years as a wealthy slaveowner, he mirrored the lives of Virginia's conservative elite.

Many of Southside Virginia's original settlers had migrated from the Tidewater region during the eighteenth century and the Piedmont mirrored East Virginia's conservative, hierarchical slave culture. The East Virginia elite maintained their political, economic and social control by perpetuating their forefathers' ideology which postulated that one's bloodlines, wealth, property and refinement determined one's worth and social position. In order to vote, a white male had to own at least 100 acres of "uncultivated land without a house, or 25 acres of improved land with a house, or a house and lot in town." During the early antebellum period, however, more white male Virginians persistently asserted their rights and demanded constitutional revision. Out of the twenty four states in the union, twenty-two extended white men's suffrage, and Virginia was one of the two which did not. As public outcries for reform mounted, slaveowners yielded to the white majority's demands and hence the Virginia Convention of 1829-1830 took place on October 5, 1829. During this convention, conservatives and reformers voiced their respective ideologies for their support or rejection of white men's universal suffrage. Virginia's eastern and western regions represented the distinctions between these two ideologies. In contrast to the Tidewater and Piedmont regions' focus on agriculture, western Virginians' assets had advanced through miscellaneous forms of enterprise, such as harvesting diversified crops, manufacturing in textiles and iron and wool trading. While western Virginia's population grew over 36 percent in 1820, eastern Virginia grew approximately 2 percent. While the gap between the poor and rich in the

hierarchical slave societies of the Tidewater and Piedmont was obvious, wealth was more evenly distributed in the more egalitarian Valley and Trans-Allegheny. The majority of influential conservative and moderate leaders were educated planters in eastern and Piedmont Virginia who were affiliated with the Episcopal Church, but they represented a low percentage of their region since many middle and lower class Virginians embraced evangelicalism. Most reform leaders were lawyers and only a minority of them attended college and they preferred the more democratic religion of egalitarianism.⁸⁷

Conservative Virginians argued against extending white men's suffrage because wealthy property owners, they asserted, had more to lose by giving more power to those who wished to deprive them of their land and wealth. The stability of property took precedence over the philosophy of liberty, Virginia gentry argued, by the natural dictates of social order. The wealthy minority's rights preceded the majority's freedom, conservative easterners argued, because "the majority may not sufficiently respect the rights of the minority." They argued that harmony resulted when the wealthy cared for the indigent by one's duty of noblesse oblige, and, in return the poor capitulated to the gentry with "gratitude." If this social order ceased, they claimed, "the strong man would lie under a constant temptation to rob the weaker; the industrious would fall prey to the idle; anarchy, disorder, and a want of energy would be seen throughout the world." Ironically, this view described the weaknesses of southern society. The strong robbed the slaves' natural rights and the slaves' industry fell "prey to the idle" through "fear and coercion."

⁸⁷ Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. The Rhetoric of Conservatism: The Virginia Convention of 1829-30 and the Conservative Tradition in the South (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1982), pp. xiii-xvii, 2-9, 31, 38-43, 65-77, quotation on pp. 2; William G. Shade, "Society and Politics in Antebellum Virginia's Southside," *Journal of Southern History* LIII (2) (May 1987), p. 165.

Reformist John Cooke reacted to the conservatives' ideology as "a doctrine monstrous, hateful and incredible!... it is founded on the assumption that men are by nature, *robbers*, and are restrained from incessant invasions of the rights of each other, only by fear or coercion." Conservatives argued they would be victims of the majority if they revised the Constitution, and the reformers argued that they were the plantocrats' slaves if no revisions were made. Some revisions were made, however, and the Constitution of 1830 extended "the vote to freeholders, holders of leases with terms of not less than five years, or taxpayers in town; and it included a residency requirement." While conservatives and moderates viewed the compromise as a safe concession, reformers viewed the results as a failure.⁸⁸

Fletcher and Toler responded to western Virginians' resentment over the constitutional results by asserting compromise was needed when regions' needs were so diverse. Western Virginians interpreted the convention's compromise as a failure because their voice seemed to perpetuate rather than relinquish their oppression. Fletcher and Toler saw the promise of future reform when they queried "[s]hall a starving man refuse to accept any sustenance because he cannot get all he asks? Does he not know that the little which may be offered to him, if accepted, will infuse fresh energy into his system, and arm him with renewed strength, to struggle for more, while if it be rejected, death may ensue?"⁸⁹ The editors were prophetic because in 1851 western Virginia counties obtained the majority through the revised Constitution which allocated

⁸⁸ Bruce, *The Rhetoric of Conservatism*, pp. 65-89, quotations on pp. 66, 78, 79, 81.

⁸⁹ *Lynchburg Virginian*, February 15, 1830.

representation in the House of Delegates by white population; also, legislators extended universal suffrage to all white men. Elijah approved the modification and noted that the revised Constitution “possesses all the constituents of pure progressive Democracy, which, you know, suits the Times. I now consider myself rather a Looker-on, can live under most any Government that others can.”⁹⁰ In May of 1852, however, Elijah noted the detriment of giving universal suffrage to illiterate men who lacked the education, self-control, training and wisdom to utilize their newfound freedom with responsibility, respect and honor. He verified that every man should perform his civic duty, but “for a man of worth, of nice and delicate feelings, to enter into a contest with a rowdy and a rascal for an office requires strong nerve and great devotion to public weal, and . . . when the low and degraded so greatly outnumbered the wise, discreet and prudent . . . it would be more questionable whether it be our duty to present ourselves unsolicited for an office, to have our integrity and motives questioned, to have all our private transactions during life brought into view, distorted and slandered by the very dregs of creation.”⁹¹ Elijah witnessed how the elite’s oppression over the lower classes’ educational and civic opportunities instigated their fears of the white majority’s rights.

Antebellum Piedmont Virginia dominated the state’s tobacco realm. While opportunities for white laborers in antebellum Piedmont remained slim, slave labor flourished. Slaves and free blacks worked as field laborers, carpenters, blacksmiths, factory hands, textile workers, mechanics, boatmen, barbers and much more. In 1790 the

⁹⁰ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, August 20, 1851, von Briesen, pp. 230-231.

⁹¹ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, May 31, 1852, von Briesen, pp. 234-235.

population in Piedmont/Southside Virginia consisted of 178,262 slaves and 164,674 whites where Piedmont slaves represented approximately 38 percent of all Virginia slaves.⁹² Between 1790 and 1830, the number of Piedmont slaves increased by 79.8 percent. In 1830 Piedmont Virginia's population was 320,684 slaves and 208,656 whites and Piedmont slaves represented about 51 percent of the region's total population and 68 percent of all Virginia slaves.⁹³ The eastern and central Southside counties, such as Amelia and Prince Edward had the highest slave populations. Lynchburg and Amherst County experienced the effects of internal migration, where white populations were barely higher than that of their slaves. In 1816 Lynchburg had a population of 1,765 whites, approximately 1,056 slaves and about 256 free blacks.⁹⁴ Lynchburg's population in 1828 was 2,492 whites, 1,751 slaves and 385 free blacks.⁹⁵ The town's population grew in 1850 with 4,178 whites, 3,402 slaves and 491 free blacks.⁹⁶ By 1830 Amherst County had 5,925 slaves, 5,883 whites and 263 free blacks. Slaves represented 49.1 percent of the county's total population and free blacks represented 2.2 percent.⁹⁷

⁹² Population statistics computed by Philip J. Schwarz, Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia, 1705-1865 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), p. 97; Alison G. Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slave Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 270.

⁹³ Population statistics compiled by Schwarz, Twice Condemned, p. 197, and Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution, p. 270, 18-19.

⁹⁴ For population statistics see von Briesen, p. 46, n.1. von Briesen listed 1,322 blacks as living in Lynchburg; Freehling, pp. 18-20; Christian, pp. 58-59.

⁹⁵ Christian, pp. 108-109.

⁹⁶ Ibid, pp. 148-149.

⁹⁷ Freehling, p. 270.

The ratios of slaves to whites during the early nineteenth century, fear of insurrections and Negrophobia incited many slaveowners to instigate fear and submission in their slaves in order to maintain social control. Following Nat Turner's Revolt in 1831, slaveowners tightened laws, neighborhood black codes and plantation rules against slaves and free blacks. Control over one's slaves and their complete submission were the slaveowners' utmost concerns. As a middle-class teacher, Elijah witnessed slaveowners' cruelty to bondsmen and the experience instigated his resolve to treat his slaves decently. As a plantation owner, how did Elijah's treatment of his slaves compare to other Virginia slaveowners? How did he punish his slaves? How did his slaves react to his power?

In 1813, Elijah's father wrote his son a letter condemning slaveowners and supporting abolition. Elijah responded by censuring cruel, negligent masters and labeling slavery more as a "misfortune than a crime." He admitted that most residents ignored the Sabbath and cared little for religion, but there were as many benevolent owners as there were cruel masters. Slaves with charitable masters fared better than free blacks, he argued, and immediate emancipation "would be the height of folly and danger." He admitted he once supported abolition, and even though his views changed, he asserted, he would be a generous, benevolent slaveowner: "You must not think too badly of slave holders -- for your *son* is one. But be assured he is not fond of that species of property and whatever portion of it fortune or necessity places under his care, he will use every endeavor to make their situation as agreeable and comfortable as possible. They never shall want for victuals and cloathes and humane treatment. I know what horrid ideas I formerly had of slavery and how I despised the man who would trafic in human flesh.

My feelings may be a little softened by living in a country where such things are common, but they never will be perfectly reconciled to them.”⁹⁸

Elijah’s ambitions for respectability, upward mobility and financial security were within his reach when he married into a wealthy plantocrat’s family and throughout his life he assimilated and perpetuated Piedmont Virginia’s hierarchical slave society. In many ways, Elijah assimilated to Virginia elite’s conservatism. For example, he conformed to the Masons and Crawford’s denomination, the Episcopal Church. He served on the vestry and made generous contributions to establish and maintain Episcopal Churches in Amherst County and Lynchburg. In 1822, for example, he made the most generous contributions to the church fund and for many years he served on the vestry. Elijah shared Virginia gentry’s views that church affiliation and pious leadership enhanced one’s social standing and secular success. When his brother Calvin, who lived in the more egalitarian town of Indianapolis, converted to Methodism, for example, Elijah concluded that Calvin’s conversion would “advance rather than retard his worldly prosperity.” Elijah reconciled his views on slavery by asserting he would be the benevolent caretaker of a people he viewed as being naturally helpless, lazy, immoral and inferior.⁹⁹ Although he was humane to his slaves, he portrayed a cold contempt for blacks. He benefited from the slaves’ industry, but he never seemed to value their

⁹⁸ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, September 5, 1813, von Briesen, pp. 77-78.

⁹⁹ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, October 1, 1810; quote in Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, May 25, 1829; Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, March 21, 1830, von Briesen, pp. 17, 105, 112-113, 113, n.1; Bruce, pp. 6, 40-41; Michael L. Nicholls, “Piedmont Plantations and Farms: Transplanting Tidewater Traditions?” *The Magazine of Albemarle County History* 49 (September 1991), 15-16; Christian, pp.71-75; Elijah also supported the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Amherst County: see *Amherst New Era Progress* July 26, 1897.

humanity nor did he see their souls. When writing of the death of a 12 year old slave, for example, Elijah only mentioned the boy's worth in property value - \$350-400. Without having any regard for the boy's death or the welfare of his parents, he merely concluded that this "kind of property is now rising."¹⁰⁰ In 1824 Elijah noted the lucrative business of the internal slave trade in Lynchburg, but he expressed no abhorrence about the inhumane ways in which slaves were bartered and sold.¹⁰¹

Nat Turner's Revolt in August of 1831 instigated Virginia's legislatures to publicly debate slavery's future in Virginia while they discussed how abolition, gradual emancipation and colonization of free blacks could either help their state of about 694,302 whites from approximately 469,755 slaves and 47,349 free blacks. The majority of Tidewater and Piedmont Virginians were strongly opposed to immediate emancipation and most favored unlimited deferral on the topic of emancipation by a slimmer majority over those who favored gradual emancipation. After Nat Turner's Rebellion, the community and legislature enforced and increased slave laws, neighborhood watches, violence towards blacks and aggression towards legitimate or suspected abolitionists. Blacks' sense of self-preservation increased as whites' fears and suspicions heightened. Colonel Asa Dupuy of Prince Edward County observed, for example, that shortly after Nat Turner's Rebellion the "collections of negroes" had gathered in Farmville and were "larger than usual, with apparent dispositions to remain in bodies around the streets." Whites monitored slaves' actions, words, facial expressions, manners, postures, behavior

¹⁰⁰ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, July 23, 1825, von Briesen, pp. 96-97.

¹⁰¹ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, November 14, 1824, von Briesen, pp. 92-93.

and moods and slaveowners tortured, sold, wounded or killed bondsmen with little or no fear of punishment.¹⁰²

Plantocrats' primary aim was to enforce their slaves' complete subjection, which in numerous cases instigated slaveowners' sadistic behavior. Slaveowners' rules dictated when bondsmen awoke, worked in the fields, ate meals and slept. Virginia was one of four states which outlawed teaching slaves to read and write. Slaves were forbidden to preach and congregate without whites' supervision. They could not leave their plantation without passes, and they had to abide by curfews which demanded they be on their plantations by 8 or 9 o'clock at night. They could not trade nor hire themselves out without their master's supervision. The exclusiveness of the plantation system reinforced the slaveowners' convictions that "power of the master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect."¹⁰³ Punishment and paternalism were the two primary methods owners used to maintain their control over their slaves. Richard Eppes stated that his slaves needed to be "broken" of their lawless conduct of laziness, sloth and negligence. The owner should not inflict the punishment, Eppes advised, but watch with "cool, calm, collected" composure as his overseer whipped the slaves "slowly and deliberately." Eppes viewed the slaves as burdensome children whose recompense for their labor included shanties, portions of food, yearly lectures, torture and a Christmas present of \$5.00 for good behavior. Fletcher and Toler affirmed that slaveowners had to

¹⁰² Freehling, pp. 270, 269, xii-55, quotation on p. 7.

¹⁰³ Peter Kolchin, American Slavery, 1619-1877 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), pp. 117-130; Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 139-163, quotation on p. 141.

control their slaves to maintain social order. Since the slaves longed “after the sweets of that liberty which they cannot enjoy *here*” the owner had to “make tighter the cords of bondage and give a keener edge to the scourge of the task master.”¹⁰⁴ Elijah did not tolerate impudence and he expected subjection from his slaves; although he did not sanction whipping his bondpeople, he relied heavily upon his overseers to manage his slaves since he only spent a couple of days or so at each plantation and he normally resided in Lynchburg or at Sweetbrier plantation. He saved money by hiring young men with no families and paying them \$100-130 a year instead of hiring more experienced workers with large families for \$200-350.¹⁰⁵ Many white Virginians believed that social order depended more upon colonization of free blacks.

Elijah joined the Lynchburg Auxiliary Colonization Society in 1826, where he served as the secretary. The colonization society’s main objective was to “colonize upon the shores of Africa, with their own free will and consent, the free colored population of our country.” Virginia’s laws and society and “the mark set on [blacks] by Nature precludes their enjoyment, in this country of the privileges” of free men. As a result, Fletcher and Toler stated, free blacks were helpless in Virginia where blacks tended to be “degraded, profligate, vicious, turbulent and discontented.” Virginia’s free black population could achieve freedom, humane rights and happiness, Fletcher and Toler asserted, by spreading Christianity and civilization in Liberia and thereby “planting and diffusing those blessings over a barbarous and benighted continent.” Elijah considered

¹⁰⁴ Diary of Richard Eppes, October 1, 1852-October 1, 1854; VHS; Quotation in *Lynchburg Virginian*, October 10, 1831.

¹⁰⁵ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, July 14, 1837, and February 7, 1845, von Briesen, pp. 193-194.

colonizing his slaves, but he did not emancipate them by sending them to Liberia. He meant to keep them enslaved in order to profit from their labor on sugar plantations in Florida. Slaveowners enhanced their status by possessing more slaves “than they could employ with maximum efficiency.” During the antebellum period, numerous Virginia slaveowners shipped thousands of their overstock slaves to the West and Deep South. Of all the states and territories in the nation where free Americans left their home state to seek their futures elsewhere during the mid-nineteenth century, Virginia’s percentage ranked sixth. By 1850, for example, the 387,531 Virginia-born people who lived in other states were nearly 41 percent as many as Virginia’s resident free population that year. Like many large slaveowners, Elijah had an overstock of slaves, so Elijah’s son, Sidney, inspected land in Florida in order to settle some of their slaves on a sugar plantation. He found Florida “a rude country, most every vestige of civilization laid waste by the Indians.” Nonetheless, Sidney selected a sugar plantation where the slaves could settle and Elijah planned to settle the slaves on the new plantation within two years.

¹⁰⁶ Some Virginia slaveowners were more humane than others when they re-located their surplus slaves. In 1847, Asa Dupuy had a surplus of slaves, for example, and since he wanted to keep the bondsmen and yet limit the number of slaves on his plantation, he sold

¹⁰⁶ Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, pp.385-388, quotation on pp. 386-387; Kolchin, *American Slavery*, pp. 96-127; statistics compiled by Philip J. Schwarz, *Migrants Against Slavery: Virginians and the Nation* (Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), p. 9, 185, n. 19; Quotation in *Lynchburg Virginian*, October 6, 1831 and see also August 29, 1831, August 19, 1830, January 26, 1835, and November 3, 1834; Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, April 3, 1826; quotation in Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher May 9, 1847, von Briesen, pp. 98-99, 206-207.

his lands in Mississippi and bought 400 acres of additional land near his Piedmont estate where they settled close to home.¹⁰⁷

Elijah adopted many slaveowners' prevalent business ventures to increase his wealth. His projects included purchasing "the most saleable articles at the lowest market value & put it in a better condition by his own labor & sell it." Elijah also prospered from various financial investments such as loaning money to individuals with modest incomes who borrowed funds to start a business or to supplement a family's income. For example, Jane Jorden requested a loan from Elijah in order to expand her home so that her family could increase their income by taking in boarders. If people were unable to repay their debts, they often used their slaves as collateral. Elijah obtained many of his slaves when people were unable to pay their debts. In addition, he profited by Virginians' massive migration out of the state. His brother Calvin reflected that in "1817 a great exodus from Va. to the then new territories of Florida, Alabama, Kansas, Mississippi & Mo. Most of the emigrants sold out on time their land & some negroes & thereby [Elijah] made a great fortune." Prior to his life in Virginia, Elijah expressed his aversion towards the slave trade where bondsmen were treated like cattle. When he became a slaveowner, however, he perpetuated the dehumanization of slaves by profiting from ventures where "slaves were bartered, deeded, devised, pledged, seized and auctioned." Elijah's business ventures and his attainment of wealth centered around the "benefits" of owning slave property. Although numerous slaveowners complained that slaves were shiftless, many

¹⁰⁷ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Skinner, November 8, 1847, EDP.

also noted their slaves' proficiency and productivity in contrast to poor whites' incompetence and laziness.¹⁰⁸

Preference for black labor made slave hiring a prevalent, profitable practice while the business perpetuated poor whites' unemployment. Huge crowds assembled in Virginia on hiring day to bargain for bondsmen where roughly 15,000 slaves were hired out. Also, small slaveowners who were in debt or executors who settled estates usually rented out the land and slaves. Elijah had more confidence and faith in his slaves' industry than he did in poor whites' labor. He complained "[o]ur white men are so lazy and heedless and good for nothing there is no reliance upon them. I have more dependence in my Servants than in most any White man I procure. They become intelligent in their work and never tire at their work. No count[r?]y supply better workmen." Charges for slave labor in the early 1850's "more than doubled" due to labor needs for internal improvements. Contractors, most of whom were from the North, preferred slaves over white immigrants to work on internal improvements because they were "the most cheap and efficient labor." The contractors regarded the slaves "equally proficient, more moral and much easier managed than the Foreign Whites." A surplus of slaves proved to be an advantage for many large slaveowners who hired out approximately fifty slaves. Renters paid taxes for the slaves and they bore the

¹⁰⁸ Quotations in Gayle Thornbrough, Dorothy L. Riker and Paula Corpuz, eds., The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Volume VII, 1861-1862, Including Letters to and from Calvin Fletcher (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1980), p. 249; Jane Jorden to Elijah Fletcher, July 25 [n.d], C.C. Wingfield to Elijah Fletcher, June 17, 1854, Elijah Fletcher Papers, MHCL, SBC; Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, November 14, 1824, von Briesen, pp. 92-93; Philip J. Schwarz, Slave Laws in Virginia (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 11, 41-43; Stamp, pp. 50-60, quotation on pp. 200-201; Wyatt-Brown, pp. 256-258.

responsibility of providing slaves with food, medical care and clothes. If slaveowners rented their lands to tenants, they usually hired out their slaves as well and if a slave ran away, the renter compensated the owner. Nonslaveholders and contractors for internal improvements were the usual customers. Oftentimes large slaveowners hired out their slaves for large sums of money and if they required additional help, they hired common laborers for lesser fees from slaveowners of modest means. For example, Elijah charged \$200 for hiring out blacksmiths, \$150 for carpenters and \$110 for unskilled workers. Elijah noted, "I have so many youngsters growing up to take the place of the older ones that I can spare them without interrupting the usual course of plantation work." In return, he hired common laborers for approximately \$50. In some cases, Elijah's business transactions with slaveowners of lesser means revealed the relationship between the two classes. Sometimes business dealings between Virginia elite and less wealthy slaveowners revealed how the middle-class whites asserted themselves when the upper class dismissed contract agreements of what they perceived as modest debts. For example, Elijah hired Simpson, a slave belonging to Mr. B. Brown, who charged Elijah \$50.00.¹⁰⁹ When Elijah did not pay the agreed amount after returning Simpson to his owner, Mr. Brown wrote "you are bound for the \$50 – You state it is a small matter, small as it is, it originated with you, and I am sorry that you had not so thought it at the time, and sent your note for the \$50. I am willing, however, to leave this small matter to [illigible] Brown + Mr. Agden and let them decide by their examining the correspondence . . . In regard to the money for the hire I have no friend there who will be coming to Alb .

¹⁰⁹ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, December 28, 1850 and August 18, 1849, von Briesen, pp. 226-

... should I have an opportunity I will send the bond. I hold the bond and you can find it with me when you may call for it, or send a friend to pay it off. It is the duty of the debtor to call for his paper.”¹¹⁰

Many slaves were vulnerable when their owners hired them out. Renters were not likely to be as paternalistic towards the slaves and many times slaves traveled far from home. In several cases, a renter or owner’s whim determined a slave’s future. In 1854, for example, Mr. Mays wrote on behalf of Betsy, one of Elijah’s slaves: “Sir, through the request of Betsey I here wish to inform you that Mr. Winkfield who hired her and her daughter will move from Lynchbg about the first of next month and consequently intends hiring Betsey out for the remainder of the year and intends taking with them Betsey’s daughter betsey seems to be unwilling to Mr. Winkfield to carry her daughter over the mountains and therefore would be glad if you would prevet her being removed.”¹¹¹

Elijah disciplined many of the slaves whom he considered impertinent or lazy by hiring them out. He stated, “I make it a sort of punishment too to those who do not please me at home. Their labor is harder than plantation work, but they are well fed and clothed.

227,218-220, quotations on pp. 226, 219-220; Stampp, pp. 50-90, 179-201.

¹¹⁰ B. Brown to Elijah Fletcher, December 27, 1848; Elijah’s tendency to overlook small debts extended to merchants as well. For example, when Mr. Gilbert sent a wheat fan to Elijah in 1832, the latter responded that the fan did not meet his “entire satisfaction” and he did not pay for it, but he did not return the fan. Five years later, Mr. Gilbert stated “I think it would be no more than just and honorable in you in view of all the circumstances of this case, to send me the money for the fan. I am perfectly willing to lose my share of the fan, And if you will send me Twenty dollars I will consider the matter settled, and be very much obliged to you at the same time.” [P.?] Gilbert to Elijah Fletcher, July 8, 1837, all in IFWP, RBMSCL.

¹¹¹ Mr. Winkfield is most likely C.C. Wingfield, a Lynchburg resident who did business with Elijah. Willis N. Mays to Elijah Fletcher, July 28, 1854; see also C.C. Wingfield to Elijah Fletcher, October 4, 1853 and June 17, 1854, MHCL, SBC.

Our Great Western Rail Road from Lynchburg to Tennessee just now beginning will require a great deal of labor and make high prices.”¹¹² Slaves who resisted slavery in non-violent ways challenged slaveowners’ indoctrination that bondsmen were nothing but chattel. Slaves well understood the values of their labor and their personal worth and their resistance illustrated their “endless struggle to give dignity to human life.”¹¹³ There were a couple of slaves who resisted Elijah’s decision to hire them out, and one of whom did so more than once. Elijah hired Preston out to different people on two separate occasions in 1854. One gentleman, Mr. Jacob Ruff, who lived in Lexington and the other, Mr. Abraham Fost, lived in Pattonsburg. In February of 1854, Elijah had hired out Preston and another slave to work as blacksmiths for Mr. Ruff, but neither slave arrived at Mr. Ruff’s shop. Preston must have returned home shortly thereafter because Elijah hired him out to Mr. Fost in July of that same year in Pattonsburg. Evidently, Preston did not like working for Mr. F. either, so he left and returned to Elijah’s plantation. Mr. Fost was not amused and stated that Preston should be punished since “he left me without cause.” Elijah’s handling of this issue indicated that he accepted Preston’s refusal to work for Mr. Fost. For instance, Mr. Fost arranged a date and time when Mr. Haney could meet Elijah and return Preston to Mr. Fost. The elusive Preston thought otherwise, however, and the frustrated Mr. Fost wrote Elijah that he had “sent Mr. Haney to your housse for Preston, as you desired, but he was not successful in getting him, you was not at home, & the coloured man who has charge of your hands told him, it was very doubtful

¹¹² Quotation in Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, August 18, 1849, von Briesen, pp. 219-220.

¹¹³ Quotation in Stampp, p. 91.

if he could be caught. Will you put him in charge of a constable or some good man who will return him?" Preston won because Elijah did not hire him out to Mr. Fost again.¹¹⁴

Oddly, Virginia slaveowners contradicted their indoctrination of blacks' helplessness and inferiority when they sanctioned their slaves' autonomy in labor. Although slaveowners perceived blacks as inferior, they valued slaves who knew their own worth, who showed pride in their labor and who increased their owners' wealth. Although white Virginians' laws reinforced the slaveowners' dominion over their bondpeople, for example, slaveowners waived portions of their control by allowing some slaves the liberty of hiring themselves out to serve as apprentices in skilled labor and to learn a trade. Although Virginia laws attempted to protect whites from slave insurrections, slaveowners bypassed the laws and gave certain slaves a taste for freedom by allowing them to hire themselves out, barter their wages, receive compensation for their labors or perfect their skills.¹¹⁵ In 1857, for example, Elijah hired Preston out to the James River Company. Mr. Harbrook informed Elijah that Preston wanted to be "hired to me the [e]nsuing year to work at the black smyth trade - I would like to hire him if he is a good smyth which he says he is and if so I will give you one hundred and seventy five dollars for one year for him - he says your price is one hundred and ninety."¹¹⁶ While some slaves sought momentsof independence, other slaves sought plantocrats' influence

¹¹⁴ Preston was not a runaway because he was listed in an 1860 list of slaves to be divided amongst three of Elijah's children. Jacob M. Ruff to Elijah Fletcher, February 3, 1854; Abraham Fost to Elijah Fletcher, August 9, 1854, August 18, 1854, and [1854]; Division of slaves belonging to the estate of Elijah Fletcher, January 4, 1860, all in EFR, MCL.

¹¹⁵ Schwarz, *Slave Laws in Virginia*, pp. 9-11, 41-43, 59-63.

¹¹⁶ Mr. M. Harbrook to Elijah Fletcher, December 15, 1857, IFWP, RBMSCL.

for security. There are indications that Elijah had a good reputation amongst slaves as being a kind owner. For example, Elijah had a slave named Mary whose sister, Martha Pen, was owned by Mr. Woodrough. Mr. Woodrough was moving further South and he planned to take Martha Pen with him. Martha wrote Elijah asking him “a great favor” to buy her. “I shall depend upon you,” she concluded. Elijah responded to her request and bought her.¹¹⁷

Elijah knew how much slaves valued (and missed) their families. He observed, for example, that “negro women all claim the privilege of naming their children and are many times very choice and fanciful in bestowen names. They are very apt to name them after departed and absent relations, particularly the male children.”¹¹⁸ Elijah was a humane slaveowner to approximately 100 slaves, but he ensured his slaves’ safety, security and welfare only “so long as Master lives.” Through his will, Elijah tried to keep the slave families together after his death in 1858. When he wrote his will in 1852, for example, he indicated that his wife (who had died in 1854) could have four slaves of her choice, but she was not permitted to hire them out to others. He listed slaves by name and family and indicated which slave families were assigned to three of his children.¹¹⁹ Despite Elijah’s attempts to protect his black “family,” his slaves keenly felt the “freedom” they had under his dominion. Although they remained within Elijah’s family,

¹¹⁷ Martha Pen to Elijah Fletcher, February 16, 1854, Sweet Briar Musuem, SBC. The museum also has a daguerreotype of her.

¹¹⁸ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, November 10, 1851, von Briesen, p. 232.

¹¹⁹ U.S. Census Schedules, Slave Schedules, 1850, Amherst County, Virginia, Library of Virginia [hereafter cited as LVA]; Will of Elijah Fletcher, July 30, 1852, Amherst County Will Book 14, LVA.

the slaves knew they had lost the liberties they had previously enjoyed under their former master . Calvin reflected, for example “it seems those slaves who were well raised & instructed compared with slaves in general seem to feel all the love of liberty that such a master would inspire & now sigh that they are entailed on a new generation that are so different from their old master.”¹²⁰ Elijah provided his slaves certain freedoms in order to reconcile his role as a slaveowner, but he did not understand how much his slaves valued these liberties. Nor did he realize how much his slaves’ lives were altered when his children felt no compulsion to perpetuate the slaves’ previous rights.

As a migrant, Elijah viewed Virginia as a land of opportunity and he used his aptitude for business and industry to perpetuate the region’s economic dependence upon slavery and whites’ hierarchical society. As Lynchburg’s civic leader during a tumultuous time, he also contributed to the town’s industry and progress towards internal improvements. In praising his brother Calvin’s passion for reform, Elijah justified why he did not perpetuate his previous views of egalitarianism. For example, he downplayed his own talents when he stated “you have gained a reputation for disinterested and good acts which any man might envy. Still I have not gifts that would make me useful in many things like yourself. I was destined for unobtrusive, retired life, the sphere of my usefulness to be more limited than yours.”¹²¹ Elijah possessed the wealth, tenacity, discipline, enterprise, talent and opportunity to alter his slaves’ lives by emancipating them, but he lacked a reformer’s spirit. He lived the American dream of personal wealth,

¹²⁰ Gayle Thornbrough, etal, The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Volume VI, 1857-1860, Including Letters to and from Calvin Fletcher (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society), p. 272.

¹²¹ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, December 20, 1855, von Briesen, p.257.

prestige and security by perpetuating Piedmont Virginia's hierarchical, agricultural slave society, which defied egalitarian notions he once espoused.

CHAPTER TWO

ANNA HOWE WHITTEKER

"Still, I think I shall have reason to bless God, for these days of adversity, for they have in a measure weaned me from the world & its pleasures. When in the midst of the thoughtless, gay, and pleasure loving people, with whom I am surrounded . . . I feel, How vain, how empty, how short are their pleasures . . . [I] think I prefer to live among the barren and sterile mountains, with the righteous, and enjoy the pleasures of friendship, and social life than in the fruitful plains with the wicked inhabitants of Sodom."

– Anna Howe¹

Residents of nineteenth-century Massachusetts lived within an unique era where the benefits of education thrived for middle-class males and females. The Howe family, which consisted of Artemas (1779-1819), his wife Lucinda Brooks (1786-1875) and their children -- Anna (1808-1900), Sarah Lucinda (1810-1891), and Emily (1812-1883)- lived within Princeton, Massachusetts, a rural, Protestant town where law guaranteed the maintenance of schools. The Howe family, who attended a Congregational church, typified a Massachusetts middle-class family that strongly advocated education. For example, Anna, who had attended an academy in Westminster, was sixteen years old when she became a teacher.² The Howe children also grew up within a period of personal hardships where social changes were altering their society and where the demands of the middle class were being vocalized and heard. When Mr. Howe died in 1819, for example, thirty-three year old Lucinda Brooks Howe had the sole responsibility of caring

¹ Anna Howe to "Dear Sister" [Emily Howe], January 4, 1835; Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, January 3, 1836 in Emily Howe Dupuy Papers, [hereafter cited as EDP], VHS.

² Teaching was a popular profession with the Howe family and their relatives. For example, Sara Lucinda Howe's brother, John Brooks, started a school in 1829 in which he taught English and the Classics. Carrol Franklin Adams "A New England Teacher in Southside Virginia: A Study of Emily Howe, 1812-1883" (M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia, 1954), pp. 4-12.

for her daughters, who were seven, nine and eleven years old at the time.³ As a middle-class widow, Mrs. Howe reared and supported her children during an era beset by the Panic of 1819 and economical depression. Her livelihood was confined by the social norms and financial limitations of a “restricted, rural New England neighborhood.” Wage labor for women during the early nineteenth century was limited to commodity production (such as textiles, dairy and poultry) and domestic labor (such as housekeeping, weaving, shoe-binding, sewing and spinning) all of which paid low wages. Mrs. Howe’s work included shoe binding and home nursing. In 1845, for example, she bound shoes and earned \$1.50 a week, which was considered good pay in Massachusetts.⁴ Mrs. Howe maintained her farm by renting the land.⁵ The Panic of 1819 instigated many social changes in Massachusetts. The gap between the classes widened as the wealthy and upper-middle classes became richer and the middle and lower classes worked harder to maintain their livelihood. More servants were needed to benefit the privileged classes’ luxury and social standing. As a result, many young men and women migrated to Boston or other cities to obtain employment. Boston’s population, for example, increased more than threefold between 1820 and 1850.⁶

³ Adams “A New England Teacher in Southside Virginia,” pp. 4-10; “Correspondence of Emily Howe,” typed notes, description of letters with background history of family, author unknown, 35 pp., p. 2, 11, EDP, VHS.

⁴ Anna Howe to Emily Dupuy, June 10, 1845, EDP.

⁵ “Correspondence of Emily Howe,” p. 2, 11, EDP; Carol S. Lasser, “The Domestic Balance of Power: Relations Between Mistress and Maid in Nineteenth Century New England,” *Labor History* 28 (1) (1987): 5-22, pp. 9-10.

⁶ Lasser, “The Domestic Balance of Power,” pp. 5-22; Andrew R.L. Cayton, “The Fragmentation of ‘A Great Family’: The Panic of 1819 and the Rise of the Middling Interest in Boston, 1818-1822,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 2 (Summer 1982): pp.143-167, pp. 143-145.

The percentage of young women who sought wage labor to support themselves and to supplement their families' incomes rose drastically during this period; so, as job opportunities increased, competition for employment also expanded. Working women experienced a type of dependent independence for they enjoyed a form of self-sufficiency while working for their employers to financially assist their families. The increase in the female work force was also heavily influenced by the vast numbers of immigrants who settled in New England during the 1840's and 1850's. For example, Irish women became the dominant female work force in housekeeping. A "reciprocity of 'benevolent maternalism'" had existed between the northern upper-class ladies and their employed dependents in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but by the mid 1800's this reciprocal relationship was replaced by contractual agreements where domestic employees formed contracts and bargained their wages with their employers for their services.⁷ The contractual relationship between domestic employees and the upper-class employers eliminated the reciprocal, almost familial ties that had previously defined the bonds between dependents and their employers. Female workers, whether they were immigrants or American born, learned how to manipulate their contractual agreements with their employers; as a result, they obtained a sense of their economic rights. New England's privileged ladies, such as Catharine Beecher, objected to the working classes' newfound power and lamented that even "... Irish and German servants ... became more or less infected with the spirit of democracy."⁸

⁷ Lasser, pp. 5-22.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 11-21, quote on p. 14.

The wake of the era's economic depression not only altered the deferential relationship between Massachusetts' privileged and working classes, but this period also attested the middling classes' growing political influence. During the 1820's, for example, many middle-class Bostonians became increasingly discontented with the Federalist party and its false assertion that "Boston was a community of men with similar if not exactly the same, interests." After the Panic of 1819, Boston's middle classes vocalized their increasing resentment towards the Federalist Party's association with the upper-classes' interests at the expense of the middle class majority. Taxation, for example, was the driving crux for the middle classes' discontent. The Federalist Party maintained a system where the middle class paid higher taxes for their smaller lands while the wealthy paid smaller taxes for their larger properties.⁹ The aftermath of the Panic of 1819 instigated a strong organizational support for the Middling Interest party among the middle class. The Middling Interest denounced the powers of the few over the interests of the majority. The party asserted that a representative of strong character, discernment and industrious nature was more deserving than a leader who demanded deference to his will based upon his wealth and lineage. The Middling Interest neither replaced the elitist Federalist leaders with middle-class representatives nor altered the classes' political structure; but the party challenged the established relationship between the upper and middle classes, and the party widened the representation of the public's interests.¹⁰

⁹ Cayton, "The Fragmentation of 'A Great Family,'" pp. 163-166.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 163-166.

The Howe children grew up within this era where their class created a more organized, collective system to voice their rights. The Howe family keenly felt the economic depression as well. Fortunately, the Howe family's hardships were eased by the assistance of Mrs. Howe's thirteen devoted sisters and brothers who were willing to assist her and the girls. The Howe sisters' aunts and uncles assisted Mrs. Howe in educating her daughters. In 1829, for example, their Uncle John and Aunt Sallie Boylston paid for Anna's tuition when she and her cousin Alicia Boylston attended Miss Fiske's Boarding School in Keene, New Hampshire. Shortly after obtaining her education, Anna entered the teaching profession.¹¹

Alternate employment opportunities for women, such as school teaching, increased during the early mid 1800's. Most women who became teachers taught temporarily until they either married or obtained other types of employment. Nearly one out of five Caucasian women taught school in antebellum Massachusetts. The number of female teachers flourished between 1834 and 1860 in urban, industrial Massachusetts where education was highly valued. By 1834, for example, the percentage of female teachers in Massachusetts surpassed the number of male teachers with the former representing almost 57 percent of those in the teaching profession. In 1860, female

¹¹ The Howe family's relatives included Lucinda Brooks Howe's eldest sister, Abigail, who was married to Reuben Bigelow, a teacher. The Bigelows had moved to Peru, Vermont where Mr. Bigelow became the town's first teacher. The Bigelows had four daughters, all of whom became teachers: Abigail, Orella, Laura and Caroline. Laura Bigelow had attended Troy Seminary. "Correspondence of Emily Howe," p. 2, 11, EDP. For reference to Laura Bigelow's education at Troy Seminary see Elizabeth Brown Pryor, "An Anomalous Person: The Northern Teacher in Plantation Society, 1773-1860," *Journal of Southern History* 13 (Spring 1980), p.389.

teachers represented nearly 78 percent of those in the profession.¹² While the percentage of female teachers increased, however, their wages did not. Male teachers' salaries were approximately 60 percent more than female educators' wages in Massachusetts. Female teachers received approximately \$120 per year while male teachers' salaries were about \$190. The gap between the two genders' salaries deepened as school boards made cuts to decrease public schools' excessive spending. The cost of living in Massachusetts was consistent during the antebellum period; and, while professional advancement was not an option for female teachers in Massachusetts, the profession had provided a form of independence for the majority of female educators. In addition, some women in the profession notably advanced their social and economical standing.¹³ However, most female teachers in Massachusetts, who ranged between sixteen and twenty-five years of age, never obtained training beyond their common school education. As a result, they were ill-prepared to compete with other male and female educators in the North who were better trained in the field.¹⁴

Regardless of whether or not their training exceeded a common school education, many nineteenth-century northern female teachers had better chances to obtain teaching positions with higher pay in the South than they did in the North. For example, both male and female teachers received similar salaries, which ranged between \$250 to \$500.

Southern plantocrats main priority for their daughters' education was the ornamental

¹² Richard M. Bernard and Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Antebellum Massachusetts," *Journal of Social History* 10 (March 1977), pp. 332-333.

¹³ Bernard and Vinovskis, "The Female School Teacher in Antebellum Massachusetts," pp. 336-338.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 336-338.

branches, such as music, painting and French. If northern teachers were unfamiliar with these branches when the plantocrats first hired them, southern landowners promised higher wages to their daughters' teachers if they honed their skills in music, painting, dancing, etc.¹⁵ Also, while the competition for teaching jobs in the industrial, egalitarian North was fierce, the need for teachers in the rural, hierarchical South was dire. For example, upper-class Southerners who flourished within their isolated plantation systems lacked the desire to develop schools in a manner similar to those developed in the North. Many plantocrats in the early-mid nineteenth century either sent their children to northern schools, or they hired tutors to teach on their plantations. Although some middle-class Southerners with modest incomes entered the teaching profession, the South's upper-class preferred northern teachers because the latter tended to have a stronger, more classical education.¹⁶

The appeal for, and economic gratification of, the teaching profession as a permanent form of employment were minimal. Northern teachers in New England frequently alternated their living quarters by boarding with their students' families during the semesters. Most teachers of both genders were single and they usually stayed in the profession for no more than two years. Living accommodations were another advantage

¹⁵ Pryor, "An Anomalous Person: The Northern Teacher in Plantation Society, 1773-1860," pp. 362-367; Anna Howe to "Dear Sister" [Emily Howe], January 4, 1835; Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 11, 1836. For references to northern teachers who needed no more than a common school education and a knowledge of the ornamental branches to teach in the South see Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah L. Skinner, February 12, 1835; A.H. [Anna Howe] to "Dear Sister" [Emily Howe], May 10, 1835. For references about the dire need for teachers in the South and the lack of competition for teachers see Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839 and Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 11, 1836, all in EDP, VHS; see also Bernard and Vinovskis, pp. 333-337.

¹⁶ Pryor, p. 367-371.

of teaching in the South. In the South, tutors lived within a single plantation home while their students visited or boarded within the household to attend the educational sessions. Northern tutors who boarded in southern plantations had their own quarters, a servant to attend to them and horses, carriages and creature comforts at their disposal.¹⁷

Northern teachers had an advantage over southern whites for teaching in the South because many southern plantocrats wanted northern teachers to instruct their children in a classical education. Competition for teaching jobs was minimal in the South because many middle-class whites lacked the proper training and upper-class whites had no interest in the profession. Many southern colleges flourished after the American Revolution, but most southern graduates of northern and southern institutions did not enter the teaching profession. Instead, they either managed their families' plantations or became politicians, lawyers or doctors. If a southern college man entered the teaching profession, he did so out of economic necessity. Between 1785 and 1860, for example, there were no single southern graduates from Yale College who taught secondary level education. In contrast, over 90 Northerners, who represented nearly five percent of Yale graduates during the same period, taught in academies and on plantations throughout the South.¹⁸

Two contrary philosophies defined northern and southern schools. Northern schools' philosophy was based upon an utilitarian, progressive education. Students took pragmatic courses in order to prepare for, and adjust to, a socially changing and industrial

¹⁷ Ibid, 367-371; Bernard and Vinovskis, pp. 336-338.

¹⁸ Pryor, pp. 363-366, 389-392.

world. In contrast, southern schools maintained a classical education. Northerners perceived education as a reform tool to maintain civil control. The philosophy of education in the antebellum South was based not upon transition and social development but upon a rank's establishment and heritage. Piedmont Virginians also used education to maintain social control, but they perpetuated an educational system which kept each social class, gender and race in its respective station.¹⁹ Many Northerners and most Southerners opposed government interference and taxation of their common schools, but unlike Virginia's ruling classes, the North, and especially Massachusetts and Vermont, valued education for all classes, genders and races.²⁰

During the early-mid 1800's, the Bigelow sisters, who were cousins of the Howe family, had moved to Amelia and Buckingham counties in Virginia to teach. Three of the sisters had married and settled in Virginia. They informed their Howe cousins of the professional and financial advantages of teaching in Virginia.²¹ In the Spring of 1834, they apprised Anna of a teaching position in the home of Colonel Isbell, a wealthy farmer of 'Willow Banks,' in Cumberland County, Virginia. Anna accepted the offer for \$250.00 per semester and moved to Virginia in April.²²

¹⁹ Kaestle, 75-103; Pryor, pp. 369-370.

²⁰ Kaestle, pp. 136-181, 192-217; Pryor, p.363.

²¹ Orella Bigelow had married Robert Nicholas, of Buckingham County. Caroline Bigelow had married his brother, George Nicholas. Laura had married Rev. John Fairchild, a Vermont native who had worked as a home missionary and as a teacher. The Fairchilds also settled in Buckingham County and taught in Maysville, Buckingham Court House. See "Correspondence of Emily Howe," pp. 2,3, 11, EDP, VHS; Adams, p. 15.

²² "Correspondence of Emily Howe," pp. 2, 11; Anna Howe to Emily Howe [April 24, 1834], EDP; Adams, p. 15.

Impressions of Virginia as a middle-class teacher

On her journey to Virginia, Anna observed how a Southern city's environment mirrored the cultural and economic disparities found amongst the classes and races in Virginia. She wrote of Richmond, for example, as a city ". . . built upon undulating land some consider hills. On the low part near the river, the business is carried on, the highest parts are occupied by the rich. The lower parts have a most disagreeable smell and are covered with mud and filth and but few people are to be seen except Negroes. The higher parts . . . are neat and clean, and have some elegant buildings."²³ Anna noted her first impressions of wealthy Virginians' love for leisure, finery and parties while she was in Richmond. When she had attended a tea party given by a northern couple residing in Richmond. Anna expressed her initial distaste for Virginia culture when she noted that there were "so much trifling, and foolish plays it disgusted me."²⁴ Anna's initial views of southern culture echoed the opinions espoused by many transplanted Northerners who had moved to the South during the early-mid nineteenth century. Her experiences provide an unique insight into transplanted Northerners' perceptions of, and their interactions with, an hierarchical southern slave society whose culture and religious views differed significantly from those espoused in New England.

²³ Anna Howe to Emily Howe [April 24, 1834], EDP.

²⁴ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, April 1834, EDP.

Many nineteenth century Virginians were generous and benevolent in supporting Sunday schools, temperance organizations and colonization societies, but most Virginians were initially antagonistic, suspicious or indifferent towards evangelical religion. Many who had first migrated to Cumberland County came from Anglican Tidewater Virginia. By the time Anna arrived in the county, there was not a strong representation of the Episcopal Church, but the county's upper-class culture maintained an Anglican influence. Evangelicalism gradually spread throughout the county during the mid-nineteenth century. Baptists, Presbyterians and, to a lesser extent, Methodists gradually took a more dominant role in the region.²⁵

Many white Southerners - and especially slaveowners - were skeptical about evangelicalism because the religious doctrines challenged the region's hierarchical social order and southern culture. For example, Baptist and Methodist ministers not only condemned Southerners for their "high stepping, hard drinking and fancy dressing ways," the evangelical leaders also denounced slavery and slaveowners. In 1784, for instance, Methodist ministers enforced anti-slavery regulations which forbid church membership to slaveowners. Southerners were also skeptical about evangelicalism's impact upon family networks. Migration had disrupted kinship networks in the South, and many Southerners feared that evangelicalism would destroy the remaining, fragile ties. Methodist and Baptist ministers claimed, for example, that one's relationship with God took precedence over one's family and earthly ties. Members of evangelical institutions valued an individual's spiritual maturity more so than they respected the power possessed by an

²⁵ Christine Leigh Heyrman, Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt (Chapel Hill and London:

impious master, husband, parent or elder. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, evangelical ministers sought a better rapport with their laity by being more attune to the South's culture and social order. Baptist and Methodist ministers also courted rather than castigated slaveowners and upper-class landowners to join their congregations. For example, when small slaveowners and plantocrats resisted the Methodist Church's antislavery regulations, the ministers eliminated most of the measures but kept one regulation in tact, which prohibited members to sell or purchase slaves. Gradually, many converts entered the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches between 1810 and the 1830's. For example, the majority of Virginians who professed religion in the early 1830's were either Methodists (34,316 white members and 7,447 black communicants) or Baptists (54,302 communicants, approximately half of which were slaves). There were also significant percentages of Presbyterians (11,413 celebrants) and Episcopalians (2,840 communicants). Catholics, Jews, Friends, Unitarians, Lutherans and Dunkers made up the population as well.²⁶

In the eyes of white, prosperous Virginians, the Piedmont region was a healthy, bountiful, fertile country whose farms, though smaller than those in Tidewater Virginia, furnished ample staples. The white people of Cumberland County were generally considered "industrious and intelligent, and . . . perhaps . . . the best farmers in the state." Wheat, tobacco and Indian corn were the primary staples. In 1830 Cumberland County had a population of approximately 11,690 with 7,309 slaves, 4,054 whites, and 327 free

University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp.15-25.

²⁶ Heyrman, Southern Cross, pp. 15-35, 126-155; Joseph Martin, A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia, and the District of Columbia... (Charlottesville, 1836), pp. 76-77.

Negroes with the slaves representing 62.5 percent of the entire population and free blacks representing 2.8 percent. Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist denominations were the prevailing religious sects in the county which contained four ministers in residence and 10 houses of public worship. The early 1830's was a period of prosperity for the county, but the region experienced an economic depression in the 1840's and many whites from the region migrated to other states. As a result, the county's population dropped by more than a thousand people within the later decade. There was a law school in Needhams, Cumberland, and the Literary Fund provided for poor children's education, but there was no organized, educational system in Cumberland County for the general population who possessed a modest income; therefore, educational opportunities for the white working classes were slim. There were few books in the county, so most of the residents were probably illiterate. Many of the young obtained their learning by serving as apprentices to lawyers and doctors.²⁷ School sessions on the plantation took place within the house or in old slave quarters or abandoned overseers' homes. While the younger children learned rudimentary education, older students studied the classic languages, grammar, English, geography, the New Testament, arithmetic, algebra, and the ornamental branches, such as drawing, French, painting, dancing, piano and singing.²⁸

²⁷ Martin A *New and Comprehensive Gazetteer*, pp. 19, 67, 76-79, 159-161, quotation on p. 19; population statistics in Alison G. Freehling, *Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slave Debate of 1831-1832* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 267; William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* Vol. I (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 51, 61-63, 16, 64; Garland Evans Hopkins, *The Story of Cumberland County, Virginia*. [n.p., 1942], pp. 4-79.

²⁸ Pryor, p. 367-371.

Anna Howe underwent a culture shock when she arrived in Cumberland County to tutor Colonel and Mrs. Isbell's daughters. Virginians' plantation culture, education, religious privileges and slave society astonished and dismayed her. The area attracted many plantocrats, and the county perpetuated the gentry's rise in power, wealth and leisure. One's bloodlines, connections, grandeur, upper-class mores and pride took precedence in determining one's worth. This conventional philosophy contradicted the progressive middling class views espoused in Anna's home state.²⁹

Colonel Isbell fit the stereotype of a wealthy Virginia planter who flaunted his assets. According to Anna, for example, Colonel Isbell owned many plantations where approximately 100 slaves labored to provide him with approximately 3,000 bushels of wheat, 6,000 bushels of corn and impressive amounts of cotton, flax and tobacco. His plantations' livestock included 300 chicken, 200 sheep, 160 ducks, 100 head of cattle, 100 turkeys and 20 horses. The plantation household consumed all, excluding the tobacco and wheat. Anna expressed her amazement over the family's lavish lifestyle by noting a typical meal's menu which consisted of "no less than 6 Ducks, Sausage, boiled and fried bacon with eggs, chicken soup, and often a turkey or Duck, sometimes Shad and boiled beef, together with various kinds of vegetables Asparagus, irish and sweet potatoes and when the meats are removed . . . pudding preserves, honey & c."³⁰

Anna liked the Isbell family despite their extravagance, however, and the family greeted and treated Anna with courtesy and esteem. Anna noted the Isbell family's graciousness

²⁹ Hopkins, The Story of Cumberland County, Virginia, pp. 4-76.

³⁰ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, April 1834, EDP.

and solicitous attention to her comfort and necessities. She communicated, for example, that she lived in the “greatest luxury and in the neatest ease as it regards manual labour.” She noted that she had a female slave who attended to her needs.³¹ The solicitousness showered upon the tutor by the planter, his family and neighbors within an isolated plantation was noticeably different from how teachers were treated by their northern employers within an urban setting.³²

Conflict between the antebellum North and South escalated during the 1830’s when Northerners’ criticisms of slavery increased and when abolitionists’ incendiary material infiltrated the South. Southerners resented their dependence upon northern educators and they complained about Northerners’ unrefined manners, abolitionist sentiments and egalitarian views. The northern, capitalistic ideology that Southerners despised so much, however, served as a buffer which maintained the southern gentry’s hierarchy. The planter’s views of work and occupations in terms of upbringing, class and duty ironically perpetuated their dependence upon, and treatment towards middle-class northern tutors.³³ Although the teacher played a role within the plantation home, for example, her placement was not clear. She was treated like a family member, friend and servant to an extent. At meals, the teacher ate with the family but she was served last. When interacting with the family, the teacher knocked on the door before entering a room to denote her employment status. Even though northern teachers were treated as equals,

³¹ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, January 4, 1835, EDP; Pryor, pp. 370-376.

³² Pryor, pp. 374-378, 384-386.

³³ Ibid, pp.363-365.

they were expected to conform to the household's paternalistic social norms and slave culture. By living with the planter's family and being expected to play a role within the household, the teacher lost her independence in a sense. The teacher lacked the autonomy of a boarder or renter. The society in which she mingled associated her identity with that of her employer. For example, Lucy Ruggles, a New England teacher in Wythe County, Virginia, noted that residents' discourteous treatment of her was due to their opinions of her employer, Mrs. Truslow. This form of social control perpetuated the plantation teachers' feelings of isolation.³⁴

Anna was very much aware of the stifling control placed upon her while living within her employer's plantation home. She stressed her desire to increase her usefulness, but her negative views of Virginians and their culture were at war with the individual and economic autonomy she enjoyed while in the South. She admitted that she did not possess the economic autonomy she enjoyed as a teacher in Virginia if she were in Massachusetts. Yet, while in Virginia she lacked the social liberties that she had previously enjoyed in New England. While residing in the Isbell's home, Anna stifled her adamant views and beliefs which countered those upheld by her employer and students. She curtailed her social interactions since she knew most in Cumberland County maintained contrary interests and morals. She wrote to her sister Emily, for example, that "I long for the society of my friends, and for the precious privileges I have left behind, but you see I am making money here very fast, and with great ease, and I trust I am preparing

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 374-378, 384-386; W.R. Chitwood, ed., "A Diary of Lucy S. Ruggles, New England Teacher in the Highlands of Antebellum Virginia: Part 4," *Wythe County Historical Review* 18 (July 1980), pp. 17-18.

myself for greater usefulness than if I were at home.”³⁵ Three months later, however, she voiced her isolation more sharply when she noted the lack of religious privileges and friendships she had enjoyed while in Princeton: “I had rather live by hard labour upon blessed scanty pittance in N E. . . than in the ease and luxury of the south, deprived of these. . .”³⁶

Plantation tutors’ feelings of isolation partly stemmed from their personal choice to limit their interactions with the plantation family and their acquaintances. As visitors, the teachers keenly felt their cultural differences. Southerners’ high-spirited, extravagant lifestyles were a culture shock for the more reserved, pragmatic, New Englanders. Contrary to New England lifestyles, leisure, socializing, coquetry, hunting, riding, outings and parties took precedence in southern society.³⁷ Anna’s overall opinion of Virginians was not glowing. She criticized their spoiled character, frivolous habits and their limited intelligence.³⁸

Virginia culture used education to rear moral, submissive, ornamental plantation mistresses. The virtue of usefulness instilled in Virginia’s daughters was very restricting. Young Virginian ladies’ autonomy - individual or economic - was neither desired nor permitted. Ornamental branches in education were emphasized so that the plantation mistress could be both a positive adornment for her husband’s image and a mindful

³⁵ Quotation in Anna Howe to “Dear Sister” [Emily Howe] January 4, 1835, A.H. [Anna Howe] to “Dear Sister” [Emily Howe] May 10, 1835, Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah L. Skinner and February 12, 1835, EDP.

³⁶ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah L. Skinner, August 23, 1835, EDP.

³⁷ Pryor, pp. 374-378, 384-389.

³⁸ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, April 1834, EDP.

mistress on his plantation. Virginians paid more money to tutors who were knowledgeable in the ornamental branches. Anna informed her sister Emily, for example, that Colonel Isbell's main concern about his daughters' education was their instruction in music. Anna speculated that her wages could increase from her current salary of \$200 to \$400 if she learned how to play a musical instrument, because, she observed, "[m]usic is one half with the virginians as it regards education of their daughters."³⁹ Anna counseled Emily that if she wished to come to Virginia to teach, she needed to study the ornamental branches of education, such as painting, French and music.⁴⁰

Since the North's and South's philosophies of education were so different, northern teachers felt more isolated among their employers and in southern society. Conversations were limited to agriculture, politics, household concerns, dancing and romance. The drawing room banter and flirtations practiced in the South differed greatly from religious meetings, scholarly debates and literary discussions that were valued in New England.⁴¹ Anna revealed the discrepancy between her education and that of Virginia ladies by making a distinction between her interests and the general topics of conversation of ladies of fashion. Anna was well-read, not only in Biblical scriptures but also in newspapers such as the *Massachusetts Spy* and the *New York Observer*.⁴² She found the limited topics of conversation of Virginia's female elite trying and tiresome; as

³⁹ Quotation in Anna Howe to "Dear Sister" [Emily Howe] January 4, 1835 and A.H. [Anna Howe] to "Dear Sister" [Emily Howe] May 10, 1835, EDP.

⁴⁰ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah L. Skinner, February 12, 1835 and A.H. [Anna Howe] to "Dear Sister" [Emily Howe] May 10, 1835, EDP.

⁴¹ Pryor, pp. 376-389.

⁴² Anna Howe to "Dear Sister" [Emily Howe] January 4, 1835, EDP.

a result, she sought little of their company. Anna noted that she could rarely speak in an open manner for fear of offending her employer and acquaintances: “I have become so accustomed to my own solitary musing in what relates to myself, that should I ever get home again, I fear I shall have lost the power of communication freely & confidentially with my friends.”⁴³

The main opportunity Virginian ladies gained from their studies was an advantageous marriage. Unlike Elijah Fletcher, Anna felt less welcomed among the female elite as an equal. Distinctions existed between how elite Virginians and middle-class Northerners valued women’s industry. White northern female teachers’ advantage in teaching in Piedmont Virginia centered around Virginia gentry’s contempt for labor. Teaching was below the station of wealthy plantation mistresses, and Virginia middle-class women’s education was inferior to that of most northern female teachers. “The higher classes whose education is sufficient for teaching, look down with pity upon my toils and labours, and it is so much above the reach of the lower classes, they do not aspire for it.”⁴⁴ When observing Virginian ladies’ helplessness, Anna appreciated her own education and she was grateful that she possessed the means to live an independent, useful life. She witnessed the hapless lives of some Virginia ladies when their male relatives, the sole resource for women’s stability and security, either went bankrupt, deserted their families or died: “I should always be thankful that when young, I enjoyed the means to acquire an education, as it now affords me so good, and honourable, a

⁴³ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah L. Skinner, August 23, 1835, EDP.

⁴⁴ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, EDP.

livelihood. When I look upon virginia women, and see how helpless, and dependent they are upon fathers, brothers, and husbands, and who if the[y] fail, fall upon the charity of a selfish and heartless world, I rejoice I was raised in new england, and not in the lap of ease & affluence, but compelled to practice self denial, and endure hardships. In consequence of this training I am now enable[d] to live in honourable independence, and have to give to them in need.”⁴⁵

Perceptions of Southerners’ impiety was the hardest issue for many transplanted northern teachers. The manner in which Southerners practiced evangelicalism differed significantly from how northern members practiced the faith. Anna found her Protestant, middle-class upbringing irreconcilable with Cumberland County’s secular, hierarchical society. Many white Southerners were ambivalent about evangelicalism because the faith demanded communicants to study the Bible and to examine their souls. While many Southerners considered these practices as strange and disquieting, such practices were common for Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists in the North, where evangelicalism had dominated the region since the seventeenth century. Protestantism encouraged widespread literacy because of the conviction that Biblical readings formed individuals’ relationship with God and inspired all souls to salvation; therefore, Northerners were shocked that many Virginians did not read the Bible. For example, Anna expressed her dismay over her scholars’ ignorance of Scripture: “I require my scho[lars] to] read the Bible and learn lessons, I find them very ignorant upon religious

⁴⁵ Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 6, 1838, EDP.

subjects.”⁴⁶ Feasibly, in the case of Cumberland County residents, the children’s ignorance of the Bible reflected either their parents’ illiteracy and/or their ambivalence about, or outright rejection of, religion. Anna noted that very few souls in Cumberland County had an interest in being saved: “The habits of the people here are of the most loose and licentious kind, if I were to tell you of the abominations practiced here, I hardly think you would believe me.” Virginians’ education, lavish lifestyles and practice of religion illustrated to Anna that Cumberland County’s residents thought “more of show than substance.”⁴⁷

Northerners’ concept of evangelicalism differed very much from how Southerners interpreted the faith. For example, white Southerners interpreted piety differently from how Northerners viewed godliness. Southern whites believed that hunting parties, social gatherings, horse racing, dancing and drinking did not contradict their religious practices as long as they practiced self-restraint. Due to the isolation of plantation life, southerners depended upon neighborhood parties and events to advance local rapport and fellowship. Generally, southern churches served more as business, sociable, and civic rendezvous rather than as places for quiet, solemn spiritual meditations. Instead of treating Sundays as a holy day of reflection, northern visitors witnessed that Southerners shared gossip, paid visits, enjoyed flirtations, swapped reading materials and attended galas that overflowed with shallow dialogues, food and alcohol. Anna often declined frequent invitations for weekend visits and parties; instead, she spent the majority of her free time

⁴⁶ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, November 14, 1835, EDP.

⁴⁷ Heyrman, pp. 33-35; Anna Howe to “Dear Sister” [Emily Howe] January 4, 1835, EDP.

knitting, sewing, teaching Sabbath school on Sundays, and visiting her scholars' homes. She noted the light-hearted, irreligious responses she received when she voiced her reasons for not attending social functions: "[w]hen urged very much, I have sometimes given my reasons for not going, and have been told, if I never do any thing worse than that, I should have no sins to pray away." Anna thought that Cumberland County residents who professed religion (like the Isbell family who were Methodists) were lax in their religious practices. For example, services occurred rarely, and even when meetings were available, the Isbells sporadically attended them and ignored the sacredness of the Sabbath. Anna lamented about her lack of religious privileges. In 1835, for example, she was unable to attend a single religious meeting throughout the winter. Southern women also felt spiritually and socially isolated and they voiced their frustrations about their inability to attend church services. Unlike southern women, however, Anna's isolation was doubled by her loss of independence that she had previously enjoyed through her church in Princeton. During the early mid nineteenth century, for example, Presbyterians and Congregationalists were the dominant evangelical churches in the North and both denominations advocated women's roles in the church. As a result, women had many outlets to advance their spiritual development and to instigate social reform in their community through women's voluntary associations.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah L. Skinner, August 23, 1835, EDP. Pryor, pp. 376-389; Heyrman, pp. 8-9, 20; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South, (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 45-48, 97-99; Anna Howe to [Emily Howe] January 4, 1835, November 14, 1835, EDP.

The Methodist religion was popular amongst those who professed religion in Cumberland County.⁴⁹ Most people in the county, however, viewed religion with suspicion or indifference. Patriarchs felt threatened by Methodist ministers because evangelical practices challenged the social order of the home. Converts who had no previous authority in the home challenged the deference of wives to husbands, children to parents and youth to elderly when they exerted their superiority of faith over impious, authoritative family members.⁵⁰ The prevalence of Methodism in an elitist society seemed contradictory because the denomination's doctrines, which taught all celebrants that they could communicate directly with God, breached gender and racial roles. The emotional outbreaks that erupted from celebrants during Methodist meetings, for example, deviated from how white, respectable gentlemen and ladies were supposed to behave in public. Also, Methodism provided white women with freedom and power previously reserved for white upper-class men. Within this denomination, women were encouraged to assume a moral authority by "saving" their degenerate, intemperate menfolk. Methodist women spoke up in public, gave testimonies in religious meetings, led prayers and publicly reprimanded their families and neighbors for their immoral practices.⁵¹ The popularity of Methodism may have arisen because of its support for the "cult of domesticity," which was a philosophy that had originated from the industrial

⁴⁹ Martin, pp. 19, 67, 78-79, 159-161. Hopkins, pp. 76-79.

⁵⁰ Heyrman, pp. 22-37, 126-155.

⁵¹ Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, "Enthusiasm, Possession and Madness: Gender and the Opposition to Methodism in the South, 1770-1810" in Janet Coryell, Martha H. Swain, Sandra Gioia Treadway and Elizabeth Hayes Turner, eds., Beyond Image and Convention: Explorations in Southern Women's History (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1998), pp. 53-73.

North. The “cult of domesticity” described the home as a temple where wives and mothers stayed at home and instilled religion and morality in their children and reinforced their husband’s moral integrity. Southerners adopted this philosophy because it sustained the patriarch’s moral control within the family.⁵²

In her travels, Anna noted the differences between evangelicalism practiced in the North and South. While traveling through Philadelphia on her way to Virginia, for example, Anna attended a Methodist meeting. In her letter to her sister Emily, Anna expressed her appreciation for the sermon: “It was preached to the Sabbath School, the text was “come ye children hear him . . . &c. The preacher after naming his text required all the children to repeat it after him, also the [illegible] of this sermon and a great many interesting questions which they all answered in concert.”⁵³ Anna experienced some difficulty in adjusting to Virginians’ church meetings. She longed for the peace and joy she had found in attending church services in Princeton, Massachusetts, whose meeting houses were filled with a “quiet & serious congregation.” Her experiences with the Methodist meetings in Virginia were notably different from that of the structured Methodist meeting in Pennsylvania. She wrote in great detail, for example, of the Methodist attendees who were wont to be more exuberant but not necessarily as genuine as the northern Methodists in their professions of faith. In 1835, for example, Anna wrote of a Methodist meeting she had attended in Cumberland County: “Some when before the

⁵² Heyrman, pp. 158-165, 191-192.

⁵³ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, April 1834, EDP.

alter, groan and cry as if in great agony, others shout as if very happy, but it is all over by the time they get to their seat.”⁵⁴

Anna questioned Virginians’ sincerity and Christian humility in worshipping God. She noted how their willful, proud nature and licentious lifestyles contradicted their demonstrations of humility and repentance during religious services. She found the hypocrisy intolerable and vehemently compared Virginians to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁵⁵ Communicants at northern evangelical meetings were wont to quiver and sob with emotion, but many Northerners beheld the intense display of emotions at southern evangelical meetings with shock and skepticism. Northerners perceived these displays more as performances than as sincere expressions of faith. In November 1835, for example, Anna voiced her amusement at the singular nature of a Virginian Methodist meeting when she observed the attendees’ contrary reactions to the faith: “Nearly all their conversions take place at Church, consequently many are spurious. I have seen many go up and kneel at the alter, to ask the prayers of the Church, but by the time they got home they would be ashamed to own it.” Anna accurately surmised that wealthy Virginians determined their worth by their bloodlines, honor and pride, but she may have misinterpreted some Southerners’ sincerity in seeking religion. The gentry’s secular power, material wealth and class superiority were upheld in the county more so than was evangelicalism. For this reason, many Southerners felt ashamed if they revealed feelings of humility in public. Intense, outward displays of emotion and the shame and

⁵⁴ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, August 23, 1835, EDP.

⁵⁵ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, April 1834, EDP.

vulnerability of losing control contradicted Southerners' concepts of refinement, honor and pride. In order to find their faith, plantocrats often had to confront their superior rank with spiritual humility within an hierarchical society more so than did middle-class Northerners in egalitarian societies. Many irreligious residents lived in Cumberland County, but Anna was not the best judge in determining individual slaveowners' spiritual journeys. She remained aloof from plantocrats, so she lacked the intimacy of knowing or identifying their spiritual dilemmas.⁵⁶

Anna's observations about southern society were accurate, but her views were also very biased. When judging Virginians' souls, she understandably focused on the snares and ills of an hierarchical slave society where poor whites and slaves suffered at the expense of slaveowners and the upper classes. On the other hand, she knew neither how the plantocrats served their community nor how they assisted those less fortunate. Cumberland County's financial support for poor children's education in the early 1830's, for example, was more impressive than the monetary provisions given by other Virginia counties, such as Prince Edward, which highly valued education, religious privileges and philanthropic interests. Virginia's elite provided funds to the Literary Fund to educate poor white children.⁵⁷ There were nine school commissioners and 20 common schools with 100 poor children in attendance in Cumberland county. The total number of days' attendance for poor children in the region was 8,647, while each child on average attended school for 95 days. Tuition for poor children was \$4.00 and the average amount

⁵⁶ Hopkins, pp. 76-77; Lysterly, "Enthusiasm, Possession and Madness," pp. 53-573; Heyrman, pp. 33-35, 212-224, 309; Anna Howe to Emily Howe, November 14, 1835, EDP.

⁵⁷ Martin, quotation on p. 77.

paid, including additional expenses, was \$4.13. In 1832, expenses for tuition and relative expenditures was approximately \$377.⁵⁸ In 1830, Prince Edward County had ten School Commissioners, fifteen common schools, 150 poor children with thirty-one of those children attending the common schools. The number of days' attendance for these schools was 3,008, but the average number of days' attendance for each poor child in Prince Edward County was 79. The rate of tuition per diem in Prince Edward County was \$4.00, and the average amount paid for each child, including all expenses was \$3.33. Expenditures in 1832 for tuition and all other expenses were \$126.45.⁵⁹ Although Cumberland County had a smaller population and a smaller percentage of poor children than Prince Edward, Cumberland had more common schools and a significantly higher number of poor children attending the schools than in Prince Edward. Also, Cumberland County's aggregate number of school days' attendance more than doubled that of Prince Edward; and the region's poor children attended school more frequently than did the poor children in Prince Edward.⁶⁰ One reason for Cumberland County residents' generosity may have been due to lingering remnants of Anglicanism, which encouraged people to perform visible (oftentimes financial) acts of contrition. Anna frequently compared county residents to the inhabitants of Sodom; so, the citizens possibly made philanthropic donations for redemptive purposes after they imbibed too much of earthly

⁵⁸ Martin, pp. 19, 67, 78-79, 159-161.

⁵⁹ Bradshaw, History of Prince Edward County, pp. 267-269.

⁶⁰ Martin, pp. 19, 67, 78-79, 159-161. For statistics on Prince Edward, see Martin, pp. 78-79.

pleasures. Colonel Isbell's consideration for his slaves' salvation further exemplifies the complexity of elite Southerners' faith.

Anna was more perceptive about slaves who converted to the faith. In May 1835, for example, Anna recorded the conversion of a female slave, who had served as a house servant under a different master but who was sold to Colonel Isbell and worked for five years as his field hand. During that period, the slave lost her only child and became ill. When her health worsened, she was reassigned as a spinner, and worked as such until she died of consumption a year later. During that last year, Anna visited the female slave several times a week and learned of the many hardships the woman suffered. As the slave's health worsened over the last five months or so, Anna urged her to prepare herself for death, to which the latter responded with alarm and promised to do so. When the slave was close to death, Colonel Isbell invited "a pious negro" (most likely a minister) to his plantation to pray with the dying female slave. A congregation had accompanied the man and they all entered the sick slave woman's house and yard. Anna described the female slave's spiritual conversion, which occurred during the last week of her life:

"After the exercises were closed, Ben came out and said to Mrs. I. your sick woman is comforted. I think God has done it. I believe she is converted' We went quickly into the house and heard her shouting, and 'Jesus! Jesus! Glory! I am not afraid to die. The Lord has pardoned my sins! . . . She continued in this frame of mind during the next day, repeated verses of hymns and scripture, which no one supposed she knew. Monday evening I went to see her, and she told me God was good, and he loved every body who

loved him, and expressed her willingness and even desire to be gone.”⁶¹ Anna noted Colonel Isbell’s active interest in the female slave’s spiritual condition. He had summoned a Negro preacher, not a white Methodist minister, to convert the slave. He also permitted a large number of slaves to attend the meeting. This meeting occurred only a few years after Nat Turner’s Revolt, when Turner, a slave preacher, used insurgent sermons to incite sixty blacks to kill fifty-five whites. After Nat Turner’s Revolt, slave laws and slaveowners enforced regulations that outlawed the education of slaves, prohibited slaves to an assembly without white supervision and that denied slaves the privileges to worship without whites’ surveillance. Colonel Isbell supervised the meeting, but his actions illustrated his respect for the black preacher and he revealed genuine concern for the slave woman’s soul.⁶²

Many northern tutors distanced themselves from the slaveowner’s family. Southern culture and slavery intrigued northern teachers, but most did not condone what they beheld. Their reactions to slavery and slaves were diverse. Many voiced concern for the slaves’ welfare, but fear of overstepping one’s bounds with the white family caused many teachers to limit their interactions with the bondsmen.⁶³ In her letters, Anna discerned the contradictory co-existence of evangelicalism within a slave society. When Anna arrived in Cumberland County, Virginia, she entered a region in which blacks outnumbered whites by representing two-thirds of the county’s total population. Within

⁶¹ A.H. [Anna Howe] to “Dear Sister” [Emily Howe], May 10, 1835, EDP.

⁶² William W. Freehling, The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854, pp. 178-86.

⁶³ Pryor, pp. 376-389.

this slave society, plantation management relied upon the indomitable control of the slaveowner. As historian William Freehling notes, “dependents must know no other morality or commandments.” Slaves could not leave their respective plantations, marry, raise a family, obtain an education, choose their religious minister, or practice religion without their master’s permission. Financial gain took precedence over keeping slave families together.⁶⁴

Although Anna mentioned the Isbell family’s humane treatment of their slaves, she neither ignored nor dismissed other instances of the slaves’ degradation, which was visible on the Isbell’s plantation and elsewhere. In her letters, when Anna compared Virginia to Sodom and Gomorrah, she usually mentioned the slaves’ conditions and the sympathy she felt for their plight. Anna expressed her view that blacks were equal to whites in emotions, if in nothing else; but the institution of slavery, she asserted, reinforced the white Virginians’ denial and debasement of the slave’s humanness. Even though Colonel Isbell fulfilled his paternalistic duty in some ways, evidence of his slaves’ deprivation was evident to Anna. Unlike the majority of most white Virginians, Anna believed the slaves earned compensation for their labor. She noted the value of the slaves’ work, and she observed that they never received any monetary gain, physical comfort, emotional regard, familial security nor humane considerations from their masters: “. . . the miserable bondage in which they are held, my heart bleeds for them. They must labour from morning till night, through heat and cold, wet and dry to enrich their masters, and enable them to live in affluence, while they perhaps are but scantily

⁶⁴ Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, pp. 51, 61-63, 16, 64; Martin, pp. 19, 67, 78-79, 159-161; Hopkins, pp.

supplied with food, have no beds to rest upon, but lie upon the ground floor of their cabins, with but a single blanket to cover them even in the severity of winter and at the will of their master, they must be separated parents from children husbands from wives to go, they know not where, with not the most distant of expectations of ever seeing their friends again.”⁶⁵ Unlike the majority of white Southerners and many white Northerners, Anna respected the value of the slaves’ labor. When describing the slaves’ debasement, she focused on their physical and spiritual destitution; but she also expressed how slavery fed the plantocrats’ sloth and permitted the elite to benefit from the slaves’ productivity. In addition, the white slaveowners debased the slaves’ humanity, and they undermined the slaves’ sense of usefulness.⁶⁶

Unlike Elijah, Anna took an active interest in the slaves, and with the permission of Mr. and Mrs. Isbell, she taught the Isbell’s slaves how to read and write. In her letter dated February 1835, Anna commented on her progress in tutoring Milly, a fifteen year old female slave who served as Anna’s servant, to read and write. Anna expressed her hopes that Milly would be reading the Bible by the end of the year. Anna believed the young girl’s motive for reading was to increase her standing among her peers since the slave community viewed literacy as a sign of prestige. Fears aroused by abolition

69-72.

⁶⁵ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, April 1834; Quote in A.H. [Anna Howe] to “Dear Sister” [Emily Howe] May 10, 1835, EDP.

⁶⁶ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, August 23, 1835, EDP.

movements, however, caused Colonel and Mrs. Isbell to end the slaves' educational sessions a few months later.⁶⁷

Although Anna supported the humane treatment of, and ultimately the manumission of, slaves, she did not believe that whites and blacks could co-exist in a free society. She claimed blacks were ill-prepared for freedom and immediate emancipation would be disastrous because they lacked the education, training, discipline and morals to lead industrious lives. Samuel Perkins agreed when he asserted in 1817 that the bondsmen "all wish to regain their freedom but have no just ideas of real liberty. They think it consists in unbounded licentiousness. It is absurd to think of emancipating them without first giving them new ideas and new habits. To let them loose in their present state on society would be cruelty even to themselves. They would not work and must of necessity plunder."⁶⁸ Anna noted how Cumberland County residents lashed out in vengeance and fear against suspected abolitionists by giving them 300 lashes or cutting off an offender's ear as punishment for handing out abolitionist material. She censured abolitionists for their tactics when she observed how the curse of slavery perpetuated the races' hatred for each other. Slaves had no legal rights, and the laws supported blacks' oppression, death and exile. Statistics appeared to verify antebellum Virginians' assertions about slaves' iniquities. The largest incidents of arson between 1785 and 1865 took place in the northern, western and Piedmont regions. During the mid-late nineteenth

⁶⁷ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, February 12, 1835; Anna Howe to Emily Howe, November 14, 1835, EDP.

⁶⁸ Quotation in Robert McLean, ed., "A Yankee Tutor in the Old South," *North Carolina Historical Review* XLVII (1) (January 1970), p. 62.

century, Cumberland County was among the top fifteen counties where slaves were convicted for serious thefts. Prince Edward was among those counties that had executed the most slaves for murder charges against whites. Between 1830-1864 in Prince Edward, for instance, five slaves were convicted for murder, three of whom were convicted for murdering whites.⁶⁹

While living in Prince Edward County, Anna and Emily elucidated the measures slaves underwent to survive on plantations and they remarked upon the desperate situations slaves faced when they rebelled against their masters' brutality. Emily wrote of one slave, Uncle Gid, who had run away from his brutal master, Mr. Hilary Richardson. When people met the runaway slave, they gave him food and did not hand him in to his master. When Summerfield Dance, a slaveowner, found Uncle Gid on a neighboring plantation, however, Mr. Dance turned the slave over to his owner, who, some said "had changed a good deal,[and] was much more humane than formerly." In 1861, however, Anna indicated that Mr. Richardson continued to abuse his slaves which caused Uncle Gid to run away into the woods where he stayed for six months. In August of that same year, another slave belonging to Richardson was working in the field cradling wheat. His feet were chained together because of his earlier attempt to run away. While he was working in the field, his abusive owner attacked him. In self-defense the slave "brought the Cradle around his master's legs & nearly cut one off, so [Richardson] died from the

⁶⁹ The largest number of executions occurred between 1855-1859 when 33 slaves were executed. The second largest number of executions occurred between 1850-1854 and the third largest, 1860-1864. See Philip J. Schwarz, Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia, 1705-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), pp. 28, 234, 286, 298, 304; Philip J. Schwarz, Slave Laws in Virginia (Athens & London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 65, 67.

injuries.” Anna did not mention if the slave was convicted or executed, but his death or transportation was likely. When they rebelled against slavery’s oppression and brutality, all slaves knew their fate and many escaped whites’ revenge and control by making either the greatest escape or the ultimate sacrifice. Anna remarked how a “[slave] in this neighborhood, while his master was correcting him gave him impertinent language, then turned upon him, and would have killed him, had not some negroes standing by prevented. He then cut his own throat.”⁷⁰

Between 1785 and 1865, Virginia courts executed 635 slaves by hanging, and of those hangings, the courts displayed 22 bodies or heads. From 1825 to 1864, Virginia courts either executed or transported 131 slaves accused of killing whites.⁷¹ Displaying the convicted slaves’ heads and bodies was intended to scare and intimidate blacks. Oftentimes, such displays had the opposite effect. For slaves who suffered brutality by whites, death was their only freedom and salvation. In their denunciations of public executions, Fletcher and Toler reported the execution of Nelson, a slave who had killed Mr. Edward Jones. The editors of the *Lynchburg Virginian* observed “Nelson met death with composure but displayed nothing like hardihood. He prayed several minutes, in an audible voice, and afterwards sung a hymn, apparently in extemporaneous effusion. Some portions of his prayer were fine specimens of natural eloquence. We recollect only one of the expressions with which we were struck at the moment - one in which he compared the

⁷⁰ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Ann Skinner, January 24, 1855; Anna H. Whitteker to [Cousin Alicia and Sister Sarah], August 10, [18]61, EDP.

⁷¹ Philip J. Schwarz, *Twice Condemned: Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia, 1705-1865*, pp. 28, 234, 286, 298, 304; Schwarz, *Slave Laws*, pp. 63-101.

trembling of his heart to the quivering of the leaves in the fall of the year.” None who witnessed the execution, Fletcher and Toler asserted, neither sought redemption nor resolved to reform their characters. The editors overheard “a shrewd negro” claim “that for his own part he had as lieve die under the gallows as in any other mode, believing that it was the sure and certain road to heaven!”⁷² While whites sought to make examples of rebellious blacks, slaves and free blacks viewed the convicted as heroes. While whites justified slavery and racial control through law and social mores, they were disconcerted by blacks’ praise of slave “criminals” who sought death in order to escape their earthly captivity and gain eternal freedom with God.

Impressions as a Migrant Teacher & Life as a Widow in the Piedmont

When her teaching engagement ended in Cumberland County, Anna planned to move back to Princeton. She asserted: “I think I prefer to live among the barren and sterile mountains, with the righteous, and enjoy the pleasures of friendship, and social life than in the fruitful plains, with the wicked inhabitants of Sodom.”⁷³ During the next three decades, however, Anna migrated to the following regions, many of which were in Virginia: Lewisburg, Greenbrier County, Virginia (May to December 1836); Charlestown, Virginia (December 1836-1840); Columbus, Ohio (October 1840-summer

⁷² *Lynchburg Virginian*, November 3, 1834.

⁷³ Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, January 3, 1836, EDP.

1842); Alton, Illinois (1842-1845); Princeton, Massachusetts (1845-1847); Prince Edward County, Virginia (1847-1863); and then permanently back to Princeton (1863-1900).⁷⁴

Anna's desire for financial and personal autonomy and her financial success in the South instigated her decision to remain in the region. Anna illustrated how easily contracts for teaching positions were made and broken. For example, in 1836 when a family from Amelia County refused to pay her \$300 to teach their children, Anna broke her contract with them and headed to Ohio. In the midst of her journey, however, she stopped in Lewisburg, Virginia to attend Sabbath. She heard of the town's dire need for a teacher; so, in a mood of spontaneity she immediately put out an ad to start a school and received twenty responses in one afternoon. This occurrence illustrated the advantages of teaching in antebellum Virginia. Virginians' desperate need for teachers, the educators' high-paid salaries and the flexible contracts between teachers and Virginians gave the teacher more control over her own welfare and future than she could have obtained in the North.⁷⁵

While living in Charlestown, Anna stated she had many male friends who were predisposed to protect a vulnerable lady such as herself. Of special note was her friendship with Mr. Whitteker, who, she claimed, was like a brother. He collected her debts, purchased goods in order to sell them to her for reduced fees, and he protected her interests when parents disputed their children's tuition fees.⁷⁶ While living in the region,

⁷⁴ EDP Collection. Note: Anna Howe's correspondence with the return address of Charleston is not Charleston, South Carolina but Charlestown, Virginia, which later became Charles Town, West Virginia.

⁷⁵ Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 11, 1836, EDP.

⁷⁶ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, EDP.

Anna received two marriage proposals. Despite the noble chivalry and attention she received, however, Anna informed her sister that she had refused both gentlemen “& shall probably live a life of single blessedness.”⁷⁷ While living in Virginia, Anna epitomized an ideology that was described as “single blessedness” that arose in the North between 1780 and 1840. Unlike many ladies in her day, marriage was not a goal for Anna. She wrote on the benefits of “single blessedness” and observed that unhappy marriages caused more grief than security: “the marriage yoke, from various causes, proves very galling to many, but to some, it is easy, and the burden light. You may perhaps think this metaphor inappropriate, but it is according to my taste.”⁷⁸ She and other nineteenth-century white middle-class northern women believed they served a higher call and usefulness by serving others instead of serving a spouse and their offspring. Teaching, voluntary associations and social reform were women’s resources to obtain usefulness beyond the home.⁷⁹

Christine Jacobson Carter argues that a distinction existed between northern and upper-class southern spinsters. She maintains that northern spinsters felt more acutely than did upper-class southern spinsters the sacrifices of choosing a vocation over the traditional role of wife and mother. Northern women sought autonomy through obtaining financial security, gaining higher education and acquiring their own chambers. Some scholars claim that marriage alone provided southern women with an identity and social

⁷⁷ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, June 10, 1841, EDP.

⁷⁸ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, EDP.

⁷⁹ Christine Jacobson Carter, “Indispensable Spinsters: Maiden Aunts in the Elite Families of Savannah and Charleston,” in Janet Coryell, et al., eds., Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 2000), pp. 111-112.

rank. Carter contends that wealthy urban southern spinsters, if they had an extended family that required their usefulness, maintained their social status and upheld the boundaries of southern womanhood; in addition, Carter argues, southern spinster aunts had greater economic security, had their own suites or houses, and honed their intellect through social interactions with men and women of their own class, correspondence and reading. Southern, elite spinster aunts would not seek an economic vocation at the expense of losing their social status, but many sought a familial occupation. Their usefulness arose from cultivating their relationships with their siblings and friends and counseling their nieces and nephews. By serving as family caretakers, teachers and surrogate mothers, Carter argues, elite, southern spinsters fulfilled their southern womanhood roles.⁸⁰

Carter's argument has merit, but family networks were equally valued by northern spinsters. Anna's Protestant ethics of duty and family networks instigated her desire to seek economic independence and strengthened her resolve to support her mother. Many northern teachers, such as Margaret Clark Griffis, shared the same values. Margaret Griffis was from a wealthy Philadelphia family who became impoverished after the panic of 1857. Because of her family's financial crisis, Margaret, like Anna Howe, journeyed South to become a plantation teacher to supplement her family's finances.⁸¹ One could argue there was a fine line between northern and southern spinster aunts and widows and how they valued family networks and reciprocity. In 1842, for example, Anna married

⁸⁰ Christine Jacobson Carter, "Indispensable Spinsters," pp. 111-112.

⁸¹ Rosemary F. Carroll, "Margaret Clark Griffis, Plantation Teacher," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 26 (1967), pp. 295-298.

the Reverend Henry Whitteker, a Presbyterian minister of the “New School” and a home missionary who was four years her junior. Anna and her husband moved to Alton, Illinois, where they administered a home mission. When Henry Whitteker died in 1845, Anna moved back to Princeton.⁸² When Anna moved with her mother in 1847 to Prince Edward County as a widow, she taught Emily’s children, and assisted wherever she was needed on the plantation. Also, Anna was a surrogate mother to Willa Anna, the daughter of her sister-in-law. Having her own home while living in Columbus was important to Anna as an economic investment. When she lived with Emily and her family, she probably had her own rooms; but, assuming she possessed financial security, the issue of having her own chambers was seemingly not as important for her since she assisted and lived with family. Her self-worth was determined by her industry, but her identity and life’s ambition was influenced by her family networks.

Anna envied neither elite Virginia ladies’ lifestyles nor their education. She thought southern ladies were generally spoiled, superficial, senseless and incapable of maintaining their independence or being useful to society. The main difference between northern and southern spinsters was their level of dependence and their ways of maintaining their social status. Southern culture perpetuated elite women’s dependence within a patriarchal society. Northern culture, however, permitted educated women the opportunity to remain financially independent within their social classes and spheres.

⁸² Quote in Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 19, 1842. Henry Whitteker was the brother-in-law of Anna’s friend, Edna Campbell, who had married William Whitteker. Anna Howe, Princeton to Emily Dupuy, June 10, 1845, EDP.

In depicting how white southern elite widows both maintained and altered slaveholding women's roles in society, historian Kirsten E. Wood argues that Southerners resisted "the bourgeois individualism that was slowly taking root in the North, [and] cleaved to the more traditional view that each person had particular duties, and some had considerable privileges, according to his or her position in society."⁸³ Wood successfully illustrates how elite slaveholding widows distinctively used family networks and reciprocity to maintain their status within southern society; but she makes a broad statement about how these interactions were crucial in the nineteenth-century North. The significance of reciprocity among extended families was not a southern trait. Also, specific duties and privileges among the classes and genders were as prevalent in the North as they were in the South. In many ways, the Howe family typified how significant reciprocal relationships were for antebellum, northern families. Was there a difference between the usage and motives of family networks and reciprocity in Massachusetts and Virginia? Also, how did northern women use family networks and reciprocity when they resided in the South? The lives of Mrs. ^{Lucinda} ~~Sarah~~ Howe and Anna Howe Whitteker provide unique answers to these questions.

^{Lucinda} Mrs. ~~Sarah~~ Howe and Anna Whitteker exemplified how middle-class northern widows maintained their livelihood via family networks and reciprocity. Anna embodied "bourgeois individualism" more so than did her mother, which possibly attested to the fluidity of individualism in the antebellum North, but both women equally valued familial

⁸³ Kirsten E. Wood, "The Strongest Ties that Bind Poor Mortals Together: Slaveholding Widows and Family in the Old Southeast," in Coryell, Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood, pp. 135-157. Quote on p. 137.

and social reciprocity.⁸⁴ Mrs. Howe labored a great deal in Princeton, Massachusetts, to sustain her family after her husband died. She bound shoes, nursed, cleaned houses, knitted and made clothes for a living. She performed many of these duties within her relatives' households. To recompense her brothers and sisters for their familial, financial and moral support, for example, Mrs. Howe moved from household to household wherever she was needed. At various times, she stayed with her widowed brothers, sisters and her three daughters to nurture and nurse the young, elderly and ill and provide assistance where needed. In 1838, for example, Mrs. Howe visited her brother, a widower, and his son in Marietta, Ohio, and stayed with them for seven months to offer her assistance.⁸⁵

Networking and humanitarianism in Princeton, Massachusetts also extended to neighbors and acquaintances. While living in Princeton in 1845, for example, Anna recorded how her sister, Sarah Skinner, and her family welcomed a five year old orphan boy into their home to live with them. Both of the boy's parents had died. That same year, George Meriam, who was a relative of the Howe family, died leaving eleven children. The children, Anna wrote, "are now all broken up. The younger children are boarded out. & most of the older ones are married." Charitable outreach and networking in Princeton extended to those less fortunate. The Howe family, relatives and neighbors, for example, nursed the ill and prepared boxes of clothes for the needy.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, EDP.

⁸⁵ Anna Howe to Emily Dupuy, June 10, 1845, EDP.

⁸⁶ Anna Howe to her sister Emily Dupuy, June 10, 1845, EDP.

The term “bourgeois individualism” identified Anna’s desire for financial and personal autonomy, but this term fails to divulge Anna’s thankfulness for, and her sense of duty towards, family networks and reciprocity. For example, Anna frequently mentioned the blessings her education and her profession wrought in her life. Her education and teaching career blossomed because of her connections with her relatives. In return, Anna was vigilant in informing family and friends about available teaching positions in the South and West; and, when she moved to Prince Edward County in 1847 to live with Emily, she taught Emily’s children.⁸⁷ Ultimately, Anna identified the blessings in her life and those of her family based upon God’s mercy and protection of widows.⁸⁸ Anna clearly valued her individualism and financial autonomy, and she appreciated the freedom which her teaching career provided her in Virginia. In this respect, she represented “bourgeois individualism,” but the term failed to identify Anna’s motives for obtaining personal and financial independence. Her incentives stemmed not from selfish ambitions but from her desire to nurture her usefulness and from her aspiration to assist her family. While living in Charlestown, Virginia in 1838, for example, Anna purchased a house.⁸⁹ In 1839 Anna increased her income by taking in boarders for \$150.00 per year.⁹⁰ She used her business savvy to fulfill her feelings of responsibility to care for her mother. She felt compelled to repay the sacrifices her

⁸⁷ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, EDP.

⁸⁸ Anna Howe, Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 6, 1838, EDP.

⁸⁹ Anna Howe, to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, September 2, 1838, EDP.

⁹⁰ Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, January 3, 1836; Anna Howe to Emily Dupuy, January 9, 1839; Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838, EDP.

mother had made over the decades.⁹¹ In a letter to her mother, for example, she wrote “I think you have lived a slave so long it is almost time to think of freedom and retiring to your quarters as you have some to go to.” Anna voiced her relief that her mother “would not be obliged to shift from pillar to post, nursing at this place, doing housework at that & c. to maintain herself.”⁹²

As a widow, Anna valued the companionship and support she received from her late husband’s family. For example, she was very close to her sister-in-law, Mrs. William (Edna Campbell) Whitteker, whose husband died in 1848. In 1854, Mrs. Whitteker, who was very ill with tuberculosis at the time, and her only daughter, six-year old Willa Anna, had traveled 300 miles to Prince Edward County from Charleston. Mrs. Whitteker knew she was about to die and had traveled far in order to place her daughter into Anna’s custody. Mrs. Whitteker died while staying at Linden, Emily’s plantation, and was buried within the plantation’s cemetery. Willa Anna (Willie) was a beloved addition to the family, and Anna remained her surrogate mother.⁹³

Professor Wood argues that southern women, unlike their northern counterparts, maintained a traditional, hierarchical belief that an individual’s duties and privileges were determined by one’s social status.⁹⁴ The fact that job opportunities in antebellum Virginia were determined by one’s social standing attests to this assertion. Also,

⁹¹ Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838, EDP.

⁹² Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839; Anna Howe to Emily Dupuy, June 10, 1845, EDP.

⁹³ Adams, p. 88; “Correspondence of Emily Howe,” p. 14, EDP.

⁹⁴ Kirsten E. Wood, “The Strongest Ties that Bind Poor Mortals Together,” pp. 135-157. Quotation on p. 137.

antebellum Virginians drew the line between rights and privileges among the classes and genders in regards to education, property and levels of independence. Undeniably, Anna and Mrs. Howe perceived their duties with egalitarian, middle-class outlooks. Although Mrs. Howe's views were not consistently addressed within her daughters' correspondence, Mrs. Howe observed that many ladies' health in Charlestown would have improved drastically if they "dispense[d] with some of their servants" and exerted themselves in performing their own duties.⁹⁵ Anna and Mrs. Howe's experiences present a couple of questions. Firstly, how did their concepts of duty and their pursuit of privileges interact with the egalitarian or hierarchical character of Princeton, western Virginia and the Piedmont region? Secondly, did their duties and privileges alter or remain the same when they lived within the respective regions?

Anna's duties in Cumberland County were similar to those she had fulfilled in Lewisburg and Charlestown, but in western Virginia she experienced a greater freedom and autonomy because she enjoyed more social, economical, legal, religious and literary privileges. She no longer felt the burdens of isolation and social control that she had experienced while living within Colonel Isbell's household. Lewisburg and Charlestown were more egalitarian than was Cumberland County. Lewisburg, a compact town with more than 1,000 people, had more freed blacks and fewer slave owners in the region.⁹⁶ When she moved to Charlestown in December of 1836, Anna enjoyed religious and literary privileges such as prayer meetings, lectures, Lyceums and libraries. Also,

⁹⁵ Lucinda Howe to Emily H. Dupuy, March 17, 1839, EDP.

⁹⁶ Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 11, 1836, September 25, 1836, EDP.

Charlestown's egalitarian character suited Anna's views on compensation for one's industry. Instead of having a slave assigned to her for personal needs, for example, Anna had employed a free black woman to assist her in cleaning and maintaining the school.⁹⁷ Anna enjoyed a more prestigious teaching career while in Charlestown. For example, in 1840 she had a thriving school with approximately 70 students in which she shared a nearly equal partnership with a Mr. Brown, the school's principal.⁹⁸ More importantly, Anna purchased a house while in Charlestown. By owning property, she increased her autonomy in a manner she could not have done in either Piedmont Virginia or in Massachusetts. She lacked the legal freedom to purchase a home in Piedmont Virginia, and she lacked the financial means to purchase a home in Massachusetts.⁹⁹

Common threads existed throughout Virginia, however, in regards to the concept of duty and the distribution of privileges amongst the classes. The concept and establishment of education in Charlestown, for example, differed greatly from the value and creation of schools in the North. Anna stated, for example, that some 250 children in the town never attended school for at least two years and the parents had done nothing to obtain a teacher: "they do not like to lay themselves under any responsibilities, or should they send for a teacher, they might have to build a school-house and make up a salary."¹⁰⁰ Anna also noted white Southerners' extravagant lifestyles and their lack of industry

⁹⁷ Mrs. B is most likely Mrs. Alethe Brighan. Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucina Howe, May 6, 1838, EDP. For reference to Mrs. Brighan's name see Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, April 19, 1837; Anna Howe to Lucinda Howe, March 3, 1838, May 6, 1838, EDP.

⁹⁸ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, March 15, 1840, May 22, 1840, EDP.

⁹⁹ Anna Howe, to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, September 2, 1838, EDP.

¹⁰⁰ Anna Howe Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, EDP.

despite the region's potential for riches: "I heard it remarked by a gentleman not long ago, that two thirds of the white people here were doing nothing for a living. They have great resources of wealth if they were brought into action, but they will never be I imagine until slavery is abolished."¹⁰¹

In 1847 Mrs. Howe and Anna moved to Prince Edward County, Virginia to assist Emily when Asa Dupuy became very ill. Mrs. Howe lent her assistance by mending clothes, binding shoes and helping around the house while Anna taught Emily's children.¹⁰² Acceptable occupations for nineteenth-century middle-class American women of both races in the North and South included mantua-makers, milliners, shoemakers' and tailors' assistants and hoopskirt makers. Sixty-nine percent of black and white women in Richmond, Virginia in 1860, for example, performed such jobs.¹⁰³ Mrs. Howe had provided such services in Princeton to maintain her livelihood, and when she lived with Emily she performed similar duties to fulfill her familial service. While in Virginia, she no longer labored as hard as she had when she had lived in Princeton, and Anna and Emily provided for her comforts and security. Mrs. Howe enjoyed religious privileges in Virginia, but she remained homesick for her previous life in Princeton. Her main duty in Prince Edward County was making and mending the slaves' clothes. Of special note was Anna's documentation of Mrs. Howe's partnership with free blacks and

¹⁰¹ Anna Howe to Sarah Skinner, May 22, 1840, EDP.

¹⁰² Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Skinner, November 8, 1847, EDP.

¹⁰³ E. Susan Barber, "Cartridge Makers and Myrmidon Viragos: White Working -Class Women in Confederate Richmond," in Coryell, Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood, p. 200.

Emily's slaves. For example, she worked with the slaves and free blacks. Nathan Holmes, a free Negro, made shoes for the white family while John Brandy (possibly a slave) made shoes for the servants. Mrs. Howe assisted Mr. Holmes by binding the shoes. In return, she received ninepence a pair. In addition, some of Emily's slaves treated Mrs. Howe's work as a business transaction by offering to repay her. For example, Frank, who was a slave on Emily Dupuy's plantation, offered to provide Mrs. Howe with bark and lightwood "to pay her for her patching for him, so she can have a good light in her room at night." Mrs. Howe's relationship with the slaves was unique because both understood and appreciated the other's value for industry, despite the boundaries of class and race. Mrs. Howe and Anna, unlike their Virginian counterparts, discerned the slaves' pride in their own work.¹⁰⁴

Anna espoused the northern conviction that education was an invaluable asset because it honed a person's character and soul. While living in Prince Edward County, she displayed and spread her egalitarian views as a teacher and as an agent for social reform. Although educating slaves was illegal in Virginia, some neighborhoods permitted blacks' education. Anna contributed to social reform, for example, by maintaining a Sabbath School to educate poor blacks and whites.¹⁰⁵ She worked with Mr. Watkins, who was a neighbor and relative of Emily Dupuy's, to set up a Sabbath school and Bible classes.¹⁰⁶ Anna hoped to teach as many students as possible in her Sunday School sessions: "I have

¹⁰⁴ Anna H. Whitteker to Mr. Henry Clay Skinner, October 30, 1849, EDP.

¹⁰⁵ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Skinner, November 8, 1847, EDP.

¹⁰⁶ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Ann Skinner, May 8, 1848, EDP.

now above 30 scholars. They are not all there every sunday, but some are very punctual. The school has gradually increased all summer, I give a testament to every one who brings a new scholar, which plan has been very successful in bringing them in.”¹⁰⁷ Anna’s humanitarian efforts extended to Emily’s slaves as well. In 1847 she began teaching the slaves and neighborhood Negroes on Sundays to read and write. She noted that they were eager students who learned their lessons quickly, more so than did her white students.¹⁰⁸

Anna Howe epitomized an independent nineteenth-century New England woman who valued her autonomy and who simultaneously maintained the traditional role of womanhood. Her egalitarian views conflicted with the hierarchical mores of antebellum Virginia’s slave society. She never reconciled herself to the views that slaves were merely property or that slaves’ labor was insignificant. Anna fulfilled her ambition to live a useful life and Virginia offered her unique advantages to support her family and economic security. She continued to view Virginia as the land of Sodom, however, because she could not reconcile her egalitarian beliefs to Virginia’s hierarchical society. Anna influenced individuals’ lives whose literacy and faith benefited from her egalitarian convictions that a person’s labor, education and relationship with God went beyond their class, race and gender.

¹⁰⁷ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Ann Skinner, August 17, 1860, EDP.

¹⁰⁸ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Skinner, November 8, 1847; Anna H. Whitteker to Mr. Henry Clay Skinner, October 30, 1849, EDP.

CHAPTER THREE

EMILY HOWE DUPUY

"The winter & spring of 1834, will long be remembered as a time of great affliction & sorrow . . . Since that time . . . blessing after blessing has been showered upon me, so that I sometimes fear the source of them will be forgotten. But again I feel to exclaim in the words of the Psalmist 'what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me' my heart I hope sometimes responds, surely I will give him my best affections, & the remainder of my days here shall be more entirely devoted to his service."—

*Emily Howe Dupuy*¹

Emily Howe obtained her education either from one of Princeton's district schools or from one of the schools outside of Princeton, as her sisters had done. Emily worked as a school teacher and as a mantua maker in Princeton, Massachusetts in March of 1836 when her sister Anna informed her about a teaching position at the home of Reverend Matthew M. Dance, a Methodist minister in Prince Edward County, Virginia. For \$250, Emily would teach approximately twelve children, all under the age of 14, five of whom were Rev. and Mrs. Dance's children. On April 5, 1836, two years after Anna arrived in Cumberland County, Emily left Princeton and arrived in Prince Edward County ten days after she started her journey.²

¹ In 1834, Emily's nephew H—died. E.H. Dupuy to Lucinda Howe, February 9, 1838, EDP.

² Carrol Franklin Adams, "A New England School Teacher in Southside Virginia: A Study of Emily Howe" (M.A. Thesis, Charlottesville, 1954), p. 17; Anna Howe to Emily Howe, March 8, 1836; Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, January 3, 1836, February 14, 1836, EDP, VHS. Reverend Dance was most likely the pastor of Sandy River Church at the time when Emily moved to Prince Edward County. See Herbert

Impressions as a middle-class teacher in Piedmont Virginia

Nineteenth-century Prince Edward County had rich mineral resources and soil which favored tobacco and corn. Presbyterianism dominated the county more so than in any other Virginia county. In 1830, Prince Edward had a population of 14,107 which consisted of 8,593 slaves, 5,039 whites, and 475 free blacks. Slaves represented nearly 61 percent of the total population and free blacks represented 3.4 percent. Prince Edward Court House had 21 lodgings with various trade shops. The county was also home to the Literary and Philosophical Society and the Union Theological Seminary, founded in 1797, which educated the “‘poor and pious’ youth for the ministry, supported missionaries, and distributed books to the poor.” In 1837 Prince Edward Medical Institute, which later became the Medical School of Randolph-Macon College, was founded by Dr. John Peter Mettauer, who conducted surgeries and medical cases in Prince Edward County’s Courthouse. An impressive Presbyterian Church and academies, one of which was for girls, were within the village. In 1830, there were 80 female students attending the three year seminary, with two principals, five teaching assistants and a few instructors from various institutions like Hampden-Sydney College teaching courses in the languages and sciences. Girls were instructed in music, drawing, painting, English branches, washing, candle-making, languages and geography. Ten month

sessions cost \$130.00, including tuition and board. The male academies had approximately 50 pupils a year.³

Emily's teaching position in Prince Edward was more advantageous than any teaching job she might have obtained in the North. She won the notice of prestigious individuals and noteworthy educators who had invited her to attend commencements at Hampden Sydney College and the neighboring female seminary. By October 1836, approximately twenty one students attended Emily's school. She was popular with Prince Edward County students and residents. For example, in 1837 Mr. Dance offered her the school's profits if she agreed to remain in the county which meant she could have as many students as she wished for the tuition fee of \$20.00 a year. The assets would have been considerable that year since she had 23 scholars in her school in addition to 40 applicants whom she was considering. In 1837 her salary was approximately \$300. Emily valued the economic advantages that teaching in the South brought her. After all, she stated, "if I am to teach a school for a living I had rather do it here for two or three hundred dollars a year than at the North for less than half that sum & with nearly double the labor."⁴

³ Joseph Martin, A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia and the District of Columbia (Charlottesville, 1836), pp. 265-269; population statistics are in Alison G. Freehling, Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slave Debate of 1831-1832 (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), p. 267; Bradshaw, History of Prince Edward County, Virginia, pp. 149, 157, 160-168, quotation on p. 157.

⁴ "Correspondence of Emily Howe," p. 2; Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, April 17, [1836]; Anna Howe, Lewisburg to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 11, 1836 and September 25, 1836; Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, October 10, 1836 and [December ? 1836]; Emily Howe to Sarah Skinner, June 10, 1837, EDP.

Emily appeared to have little or no dilemma in assimilating herself to Virginia culture. In the spring of 1837, she expressed how well she fit into the Reverend Dance's social circles and neighborhood. She was amazed by Southerners' extravagance which differed so much from the religious, conservative, frugal qualities inherent in the Howe household. She recorded her impressions of a party of approximately 100 attendees given for a Mr. & Mrs. Scott, a newly-wed couple. Those who attended the gala represented "the very top notch of the counties."⁵ While writing of the extravagant dinner and decorations, Emily demonstrated the amount of wealth, energy and devotion nineteenth-century Virginians lavished in giving parties:

Such a supper I never saw before. There was a table the length of one room, loaded with the most costly delicacies. Cakes piled on above another in the form of pyramids were placed at each end & in the center; white glass stands were interspersed, covered with ice creams, jellies, preserves, syllabubs, Snowballs, oranges, raisins, almonds, filberts, candies & wafers were scattered over the table promiscuously, & then to see the gay company around me, you might almost imagine yourself in a fairyland. The rooms were illuminated with wax candles, of different colors, red, blue, white which gave them a splendid appearance there was no dancing, nor playing, but the company amused themselves with conversation, of rather a trifling nature to be sure, but on the whole past a pleasant evening.⁶

When she attended a dinner given in honor of the same couple the next day, she noted the meal was equally as lavish as the one given the previous night. She noted that because she had retired early the night before, she had more stamina than did the other guests who celebrated until the wee hours of the morning. Emily reassured her mother

⁵ Emily Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, June 10, 1837, EDP.

⁶ Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda, Princeton, April 19, 1837, EDP.

that she would not become as “trifling” and “dissipated” as many Virginians.⁷ She enjoyed and benefited, however, from Virginia’s social customs. Many in her neighborhood, she stated, considered her a Virginian and “I presume I have altered somewhat [a]ssociating a good deal in mixed companies, among strangers [that] has given me a kind of confidence & ease, which I could have never acquired in any other way.”⁸

Unlike Anna, Emily assimilated to Piedmont Virginia’s culture. Anna was more stringent in her religious beliefs and she possessed both an activist’s mettle and an independent nature. Emily was more tolerant and although she valued her education and the usefulness that it wrought, she, unlike Anna, did not view her teaching job as a means for permanent stability. While both Howe sisters desired to hone their usefulness, Anna thrived more upon the personal and economical autonomy that her teaching career provided and Emily focused more upon traditional networks.⁹ Emily had more in common with Prince Edward County residents, who were predominantly Presbyterian, and who highly valued education. Residents also valued cultural pursuits and religious privileges. Ministers who lectured at the Theological Seminary administered Briery Presbyterian Church and gave sermons at Mount Pleasant Methodist Church. Many of

⁷ Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda, Princeton, April 19, 1837, EDP.

⁸ Emily Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner June 10, 1837, EDP; Martin, A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer, pp. 265-269; Bradshaw, pp. 149, 157, 160-168.

⁹ See “Correspondence of Emily Howe,” p.6, EDP, VHS.

Prince Edward County's teachers and ministers during the early nineteenth century were Northerners, most of whom were from New England.¹⁰

Probably the strongest reasons why Emily assimilated to Virginia's culture were: primarily, the religious state of her respective neighborhood and county, and secondly, the manner in which her employers treated their slaves. When Anna moved to Cumberland County in 1834, she moved into a neighborhood that lacked the religious ideology and privileges to which she was accustomed in the North. Also, Anna had lived with a very wealthy family who owned approximately 100 slaves and numerous plantations.¹¹ Emily lived within a Methodist minister's household whose faith forbid its members to sell their slaves. Rev. Dance was financially comfortable with a large family, approximately 30 slaves and two plantations. He placed the highest value on his children's education and spiritual growth. Emily described Rev. Dance as an unpretentious, self-educated Methodist minister with high morals and a strong character who cared for and treated his slaves in a kind, humane manner. While Anna formed networks with bondsmen and witnessed the hardships that Colonel Isbell's slaves underwent, Emily identified more with her employers and focused upon the moral stability and protection slaves obtained from paternalistic, pious masters.¹²

¹⁰ "Correspondence of Emily Howe," p.6, EDP; Adams, "A New England Teacher in Southside Virginia," pp. 29-30.

¹¹ Anna Howe to Emily Howe, April 1834; Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah L. Skinner, August 23, 1835, EDP.

¹² Emily Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, June 10, 1837, August 9, 1836; Emily Howe to Lucinda Howe, [December 1836] EDP.

Emily moved to Prince Edward during a time when the county, or the neighborhood in which she lived, experienced religious revivals. Methodist revivals had spread throughout both Cumberland and Prince Edward Counties in 1786, but revivals occurred more strongly and frequently in Prince Edward County during the antebellum period. Methodist preachers initiated camp meetings in the region around the early 1800's. One of the most memorable Methodist revivals took place in 1837, when approximately 500 converts joined the denomination.¹³ Emily enjoyed religious privileges and frequently celebrated the Sabbath by attending either the Presbyterian or Methodist churches. A Bible Society of Virginia, which had been incorporated in 1814, was very popular and widely supported throughout the county.¹⁴ Prince Edward County residents made generous, private donations for philanthropic and religious intentions, which included their expansive support for Sunday schools and African colonization societies. Sunday schools were generally sponsored by the county's Baptist churches, but the Presbyterian Church played a significant role as well. For example, in 1837 Emily taught in a Sabbath School which was organized by the Briery Presbyterian Church. Emily and a gentleman scholar from the Theological Seminary had thirty students who lived in "an ignorant degraded neighborhood," most of whom had never received an

¹³ Emily Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, June 10, 1837, August 9, 1836; Emily Howe to Lucinda Howe [December 1836], EDP.

¹⁴ Emily Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, August 9, 1836, EDP; Bradshaw, pp. 267-269.

education beyond instructions given in Sabbath schools.¹⁵ Students who attended the Union Seminary at Hampden-Sydney also served as teachers at the Sunday schools.¹⁶

Emily's perceptions of religious denominations in Virginia differed somewhat from Anna's accounts. When writing of her encounter with Mr. Childs, a Methodist minister, for example, Emily expressed her admiration for his devout and inspirational style of preaching. Mr. Childs, she stated, was "the most devoted Christian I ever knew. He visited here not long since & spent a large portion of his time on his knees in prayer & when he was not praying he was either singing or conversing with some of us upon the subject of religion. . . I think I have heard some of the best sermons since I have been in Virginia that I ever heard. The preachers generally are very impressive & much more animated than those at North." Presbyterianism and northern ideologies influenced Prince Edward County since many northern ministers and teachers preached and taught there. The northern influence over religion in Piedmont Virginia started around the late 1740's when Presbyterian ministers moved to the region to preach the Gospel.¹⁷

Emily altered her views about slavery and embraced pro-slavery ideology when she observed the paternalistic manner in which her employer, friends and neighbors cared for their slaves in adherence to Methodist ideology. She noted the Dance family's slaves

¹⁵ Emily Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, June 10, 1837, EDP. "Lawyer Watkins" is Henry N. Watkins of "Oldham," and father of Richard H. Watkins, who later married Mary Purnell Dupuy, daughter of Asa and Emily Dupuy. The Presbyterian mission school where Emily taught later became a public school for African Americans. This school was called "Old Mission." See "Correspondence of Emily Dupuy", p. 8, EDP; Adams, pp. 38-39. Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p. 11.

¹⁶ Martin, pp. 76-79; Bradshaw, pp. 257-58, 283-285.

¹⁷ Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, April 19, 1837, EDP.

professed religion and she observed that Rev. and Mrs. Dance did not sell their slaves. Emily's good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Jackson, who treated Emily like a daughter, were wealthy with approximately 40 slaves. Emily claimed they clothed and fed their slaves well and did not work them too hard. The slaves had their own bit of land to grow their own tobacco and corn, and some of them were literate and their owners encouraged them to attend Sabbath every Sunday if they wished, and some slaveowners provided their females with modes of travel. Emily stated "I really dont suppose one of [the slaves] would accept freedom if it was offered them."¹⁸ She assumed slaves enjoyed and benefited from their enslavement because they appeared contented and happy with their lives. She concluded that "[t]he[i]re condition is in many respects better than I expected if slavery existed every where as in Mr. Dance's family & in some others that I know it would not be so much of a curse as many people imagine . . ."¹⁹ Other Northerners expressed similar impressions when they visited the South. Major General Quitman of New York asserted in 1822 that Mississippi slaves were "a happy, careless, unreflecting, good-natured race, who, left to themselves, would degenerate into drones or brutes; but subjected to wholesome restraint and stimulus become the best and most contented of laborers. They are strongly attached to 'old massa' and 'old missus,' but their devotion to 'young massa' and 'young missus' amounts to enthusiasm. They have great family pride, and are the most arrant coxcombs and aristocrats of the world."²⁰ When Emily and

¹⁸ Emily Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, August 9, 1836, EDP.

¹⁹ Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, [December ? 1836] EDP.

²⁰ Lyon G. Tyler, ed., "Life in the Old South," Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine vol. 11 (2) (October 1920), pp. 102-103.

other visiting Northerners defended slavery, they defended a social work ethic in which racial, social control was maintained and slaves received compensation for their labor through the master's paternalism.

In 1838 Emily received a marriage proposal from Col. Asa Dupuy, a gentleman slaveowner "of extensive fortune, great respectability, & undoubted piety" who was "universally esteemed & beloved." There was a twenty-five year difference between Emily Howe and Colonel Asa Dupuy, who was born in 1788. Asa Dupuy had moved from his family's home in Nottoway County to Prince Edward County prior to 1806. He was a pious, active member of the Briery Presbyterian Church. He had fulfilled many civic and political functions by serving as a trustee of Hampden Sydney College, a justice of the county in 1816, and Prince Edward's sheriff in 1845. In 1832 he served as a colonel of the county militia of the 63rd Regiment. He had represented his county while serving in the House of Delegates as a Whig member for fifteen years until 1834.²¹

Life & Impressions as a Plantation Mistress in Prince Edward County

Emily Howe married Asa Dupuy on Tuesday January 30, 1838.²² Anna disapproved of Emily's marriage to a slaveowner, but in March 1838, after she had inquired about Mr. Dupuy's character, Anna expressed her approval of her new brother -

²¹ Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, December 13, 1837, February 9, 1838; E.H. Dupuy to Sarah Skinner, March 20, 1839, EDP. See also Eggleston Papers, Mss1Ef396b 1-39, VHS. See also "Correspondence of Emily Howe", p. 9, EDP; Bradshaw, pp. 157, 180, 186-89, 205, 230-232, 761, 284.

²² Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, February 9, 1838, December 13, 1837, EDP.

in-law.²³ She informed her mother “[f]rom various sources I have heard [Emily] has married the best man in Prince Edward, with wealth & honour in abundance.”²⁴ By 1847, for example, Asa Dupuy owned about 1900 acres of land.²⁵ Anna concluded that Emily’s choice suited her well since “light work . . . is just such a life you know as [Emily] — was always fond of, and as her Good Luck will have it. She has got into just such a situation, as suits her.”²⁶ Emily assimilated to Piedmont Virginia’s hierarchical slave society. She adapted to Virginia customs and to her role as plantation mistress and slave manager, and she embraced the ideology of paternalism. She maintained her middle-class Protestant ethics of industry, duty and self-reliance within the confines of a plantation system. Unlike Virginia’s female elite who were born into this lifestyle, Emily did not complain when fulfilling her duties to her “black family” and she instructed and trained her daughters to be self-sufficient.

Historians have written about plantation mistresses’ repression within a male dominated, hierarchical slave society. The fundamental premise of nineteenth -century southern marriages was wives’ submission to, and their total dependence upon their husbands. The hierarchical culture in which they lived often instigated alienation and antagonism between the spouses. New Englander Samuel Perkins attested that southern men were domineering, irascible masters to their wives and slaves and were susceptible

²³ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, March 20, 1838; Anna Howe to Lucinda Howe, March 3, 1838; Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, September 2, 1838, EDP.

²⁴ Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, March 29, 1838, May 6, 1838 EDP.

²⁵ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Skinner, November 8, 1847, EDP.

²⁶ Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, EDP.

to debauchery.²⁷ As a contemporary newcomer to Virginia, Elijah Fletcher perceived married couples' relationships differently. A "peculiarity among the Virginians," he stated, was "the women wear the breaches." When callers visited a plantation, they paid calls to the plantation mistress and not to the master. If a domestic issue or concern arose, the plantation mistresses' advice and instructions took precedence. Elijah concluded that he found "it a matter of consequence to make my first address to madam and gain her favor and good opinion, which is an effectual security of the good will of her husband."²⁸ Some historians assert that southern elite marriages were loving, fulfilling and egalitarian despite the hierarchical culture in which they lived. The foundation of the couple's relationship was based more upon shared burdens and experiences in life.²⁹ Anna and Emily's observations about Virginia elite couples attest to both arguments, but Asa and Emily's marriage reinforced the latter argument.³⁰ Emily's love, devotion and esteem for her husband was evident in her letters. In 1838, for example, shortly after she married, Emily informed her mother "if I had sought the world over, I could not have found a man who would have suited me better than the one I have got. I am convinced by

²⁷ For references to plantation mistresses' oppression see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South, (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Robert C. McLean, ed., "A Yankee Tutor in the Old South," North Carolina Historical Review XLVII (1) (January 1970), p.66.

²⁸ Elijah Fletcher to Jesse Fletcher, October 1, 1810, October 31, 1810, von Briesen, pp. 18, 20.

²⁹ For references about egalitarian relationships between southern spouses see Melinda S. Buza, "'Pledges of Our Love': Friendship, Love and Marriage Among the Virginia Gentry, 1800-1825," in Edward L. Ayers and John C. Willis, eds., The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1991), pp. 9-36.

³⁰ Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 6, 1838; E.H. Dupuy to her daughter Lavallette, November 16, 1860, EDP.

... a two years personal acquaintance that he is a man of piety, virtue & integrity & judge by the love his servants bear him that he has an amiable disposition & is a kind master.”³¹ Emily noted that life away from family and friends in New England was difficult, but her marriage and her Virginian friends increased the blessings in her life.³²

Southern girls' formal education suited the region's patriarchal ideology by culturally preparing them for marriage and motherhood. Historian Christie Anne Farnham argues that although upper-class, southern men and women received equal higher education, women were confined by the purpose of their education to reinforce their roles as plantation wives and mothers.³³ Emily Howe's circumstances were different from those of most southern belles. Many southern girls married when they were in their late teens or early twenties. Emily was 26 years old and she had led an independent life in which she had financially supported herself before she wed.³⁴ Although Emily's education did not extend beyond common schooling, she was free of the helplessness and vulnerability endured by most nineteenth-century southern belles whose studies taught them to depend solely on their menfolk.

³¹ Quotation in Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, March 20, 1838; E.H. Dupuy to Lucinda Howe, February 9, 1838; Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, August 15, 1840, October 22, 1838, July 3, 1841, EDP.

³² E. Dupuy to Sarah Skinner, August 15, 1840, EDP.

³³ Melinda S. Buza, "Pledges of Our Love': Friendship, Love and Marriage Among the Virginia Gentry, 1800-1825," pp. 11-30; Christie Anne Farnham, The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

³⁴ Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, [December 1836]; Anna Howe to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, April 26, 1839, June 10, 1841; E.H. Dupuy to her daughter Lavallette, November 16, 1860; Anna Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, May 1838; E.H. Dupuy to Dear Sister, July 12, 1870, EDP.

Unlike the stereotypical hierarchical southern master depicted by many scholars, Asa Dupuy was neither domineering nor distant in his relationship with Emily and their children. Emily's relationship with her husband was based more upon a partnership rather than upon a power structure. She informed her mother, for example, that shortly after she married her husband was considerate and helpful in offering suggestions about managing a plantation.³⁵ Asa was very paternal and interactive with children. When Emily and Asa visited his brother's home, for example, she wrote how much the nephews and nieces loved their uncle.³⁶ He was also a doting father to his and Emily's daughters: Mary Purnell (1839), Maria Lucinda (1841), Lavallette (Lettie) (1843) Anne Lefevre (Nannie) (1845) and Emily Howe (Emmie) (1846-1856). In 1841, for example, Emily wrote of her husband's gentle and affectionate interaction with his children: "I dont think you ever saw a man more fond of children than Mr. D is, or a better nurse for them. When Maria is crying if he takes her she is quiet directly." Asa was a generous, industrious humanitarian who used his wealth to benefit his fellow citizens and relatives. He contributed a great deal to ease the poor population's hardships and he financially assisted relatives with low incomes and large families.³⁷

Sensitive to the fact that she had married a slaveowner, Emily addressed the issues that concerned her family the most about the South: religion and slavery. She had joined

³⁵ Emily Howe Dupuy to Lucinda Howe, March 20, 1838; E.H. Dupuy to Sarah Skinner, December 12, 1838, August 15, 1840, EDP.

³⁶ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Lucinda Howe March 20, 1838, EDP.

³⁷ Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, July 3, 1841, EDP. See "Correspondence of Emily Howe," EDP; Bradshaw, pp. 270-271.

her husband's church, Briery Presbyterian, but both she and her husband attended Methodist meetings as well. In 1837 Emily expressed her disappointment about the "low state of religion" in Massachusetts that was mentioned by her mother in an earlier letter. Evidently, her mother cited northern preachers' condemnation of slaveowners. While expressing her disappointment that Massachusetts' residents were becoming more secular, Emily reproached Northerners' focus on Southerners' sins while they ignored their own. She asserted that Northerners had an inaccurate and unjustified view of slaveholders. Virginia slaveowners, she stated, were responsible, fair and humane Christian masters who reformed the slaves and encouraged them to lead Christian lives. Emily admitted that she knew there were "some very licentious, bad men in Va. & so there are every where, but I believe I have met with some more devotedly pious than any that I ever met with at the North."³⁸ The Second Great Awakening spread throughout Virginia during the mid nineteenth-century and Emily observed the powerful impact that a "glorious revival" had upon her entire neighborhood where all families but one converted, of which she exclaimed "I have never witnessed any thing in comparison with it at the North."³⁹

The religious state of Virginia during the 1840's and 1850's greatly contrasted from how most Virginians had celebrated Sabbath during the earlier decades. Prince Edward County ministers and laity traveled approximately three to thirty miles to different plantations during the weekend in order to preach or hear the Gospel on the

³⁸ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, February 9, 1838, EDP.

³⁹ Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, December 13, 1837, EDP.

Sabbath.⁴⁰ It was customary for travelers to spend a night or a weekend with a family in whose neighborhood the meetings took place. During one such Methodist religious meeting, 40 converts professed religion. Emily witnessed “[t]here has been a great change in this neighborhood . . . some who were very wicked, are now living like consistent christians throughout this section of the country, & Oh! that it might result in a general turning to the Lord among all the classes, colours, & denominations.”⁴¹ The tide of religious revivals inspired some denominations more so than others. In 1839, for example, while she rejoiced over the renewed religious revival in Princeton, she noted the ebb and flow of religious fervor among denominations in Prince Edward. Methodists were more blessed with powerful revivals, while the Presbyterians were more burdened by church politics.⁴² Division within the Presbyterian Church climaxed during its 1837 General Assembly in Philadelphia. Discord culminated over doctrinal interpretations, aid for foreign missions, and the elimination of the 1837 Assembly by four northern assemblies in the Presbyterian Church. The clashing factions that resulted from this division were dubbed the “Old School” and “New School.” Prince Edward acutely felt the outcome of this division which affected Hampden-Sydney’s College Church and Briery Church. ‘Mr. Compton’s Church,’ which was built at the Court House, was one of the many “New School” churches that were formed.⁴³

⁴⁰ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Ann Skinner, January 27, 1854; Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 19, 1842, March 27, 1847; Anna H. Whitteker to Mr. Henry Skinner, October 30, 1849; EDP.

⁴¹ Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, July 3, 1841, EDP.

⁴² Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, March 20, 1839, EDP.

⁴³ Bradshaw, pp. 249-50; “Correspondence of Emily Howe,” EDP.

A unique and contradictory aspect about southern evangelicalism was the evangelical's outlook of the slave's spiritual identity. The antebellum South based its social order, customs and laws around the conviction that blacks were incapable of noble feelings and thoughts. Yet, evangelicalism contended that all souls, once they were converted, were equal in God's Love. Some white Southerners and Northerners expressed praise for individual slaves and black preachers' piety, charisma and eloquence in expressing their spiritual depth.⁴⁴ Anna Howe Whitteker's general passion for religion and her interest in the slaves' welfare caused her to write of their religious conversions. Anna stated that fifteen slaves on Emily's plantation professed religion while almost all of the slaves were seeking religion. She noted their sincerity in living the faith: "One old man John Shepard says he wants to get converted mightily, but he has lived so long in his sins, he is afraid he will never get through if he begins. I never saw a negro who was a Universalist, they all believe they shall go to hell if they don't repent."⁴⁵ Anna also wrote of the slaves' perception of Jesus and salvation. She recorded an example of the slaves' prayer meeting and explained how Margaret, a weaver on Emily's plantation, had converted to Christianity when she was ill with Consumption. The slave's genuine faith, Anna observed, contrasted with the wealthy slaveowner's spiritual strife:

She told me several weeks ago, she was completely miserable, because she was not prepared to die, but since then there has been a very happy change in her. She says, Christ has come to her, to take away her sins, that 'she loves God, and God loves her.' She said before Christ came to her, she was so unhappy when she lay there alone, she could do nothing but cry. Now, she loves to be alone, to think

⁴⁴ Heyrman, The Southern Cross, pp. 217-257; Emily Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 19, 1842, EDP.

⁴⁵ Anna H. Whitteker to Mr. Henry Clay Skinner, October 30, 1849, EDP.

of her God & Heaven. She says she shall soon go home to her Father's house. . . . They had a prayer meeting there last sunday. Uncle aaron, (Margaret's father,) aggy, margaret, & several others were on the mount. Aggy said 'she was hugged up in Christ.) She could do nothing but praise & thank Him . . . Here was the display of the triumphant grace of God, to the poor & despised of this world, confounding the things that are mighty. Margaret, poor ignorant slave as she is, seems to have a clear view of the way of salvation. She casts herself into the Arms of Christ a poor miserable sinner, is filled with thankfulness & joy, that He receives one so unworthy, & says she lies in His arms like the helpless infant, to be disposed of as he chooses.⁴⁶

In comparison to their attendance at other churches, Virginia's free blacks and slaves were predominantly present in the Baptist and Methodist Churches. These two denominations provided the single venue in which others perceived black Southerners' souls as either equal or superior to that of whites.⁴⁷ To an extent, some slaves enjoyed the freedom of choosing their own denomination. Although Asa and Emily Howe attended Briery Presbyterian Church, for example, some of their slaves attended Sharon Baptist Church. Slaves generally had to obtain permission from their slaveowners to attend separate churches.⁴⁸ Emily's observations of revival among her slaves focused on the justification of slavery:

The poor slave too, who receives so much sympathy on account of his limited priveleges, has been a sharer in this good work. They go to preaching on the sabbath as much as the white people, or can do it if they choose & many of them I believe are humble christians. . . All the grown people on this plantation but one profess religion, & give evidence of a real piety. They are in the general a very happy people, I think & I have no doubt you would say so if you were acquainted with them. . . Forty of fifty & perhaps more have professed religion [in] this vicinity during the last revival, & regular meetings are held on sabbath

⁴⁶ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Ann Skinner, May 8, 1848, EDP.

⁴⁷ Heyrman, pp. 217-257; Emily Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 19, 1842, EDP.

⁴⁸ Bradshaw, pp. 282-284.

evenings exclusively for their benefit. When I reflect upon it, it really seems astonishing that the people at the North have no more correct ideas of slavery as it exists here.⁴⁹

Many slaves perceived their faith and slavery differently from most whites.

Austin Steward, an ex-slave, repudiated assertions about black inferiority and he exclaimed that whites “attempted to apologize for the enslaving of the Negro, by saying that they are inferior to Anglo-Saxon race in every respect. This charge I deny; it is utterly false. Does not the Bible inform us that ‘God hath created of one blood all the nations of the earth?’ Other slaves revealed how their masters exerted control over them through their interpretations of religious teachings. Henry Box Brown, for example, claimed he believed his former master “was Almighty God and that his son, my young master, was Jesus Christ.”⁵⁰

The ideology of paternalism, which emphasized a slaveowner’s Christian duty to treat their black “family” with humane decency gradually spread throughout the mid-nineteenth century. Paternalism was the slaveowners’ way to control their slaves and justify slavery on a religious and humanitarian basis. In response to Northerners’ condemnation of slavery and abolitionists’ demands for emancipation, slaveowners portrayed their iron-shackled hold over slaves as silken strands of benevolence.⁵¹ As incentives for slaves’ labor, slaveowners permitted their bondsmen to attend parties and

⁴⁹ Emily Howe to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, December 13, 1837, EDP.

⁵⁰ Quotations in Maurice Duke, Don’t Carry Me Back!: Narratives by Former Virginia Slaves (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1995), pp. 35, 19.

⁵¹ Frechling, pp. 270, 269, xii-55.

gave them gifts, allowances, recompense for working overtime and some days off on the 4th of July, Christmas and New Year. “Our Servants are now enjoying themselves in great perfection and I do every thing to make it a merry time with them,” Elijah Fletcher claimed on December 26th in 1843; “[t]hey all started from here this morning to Tusculum Plantation to a Quilting, and as it was muddy the girls went in a four horse Wagon. They will stay all night and dance to the Banjo and be back tomorrow.”⁵² Although black codes forbid slaves to trade items, Elijah allowed his bondsmen to sell their crops. When he defended himself as a slaveowner to his brother Calvin (who favored voluntary emancipation in the “old Slave states” and free soil in the remaining territories)⁵³ Elijah noted his paternalistic generosity towards his slaves:

We are not doing much except preparing for a happy Christmas for our Servants. They have all to sell their crops, which consists principally of corn and it takes many wagon loads and each wants to go with it and lay in their finery and small comforts. Your friends would many of them be surprised to see their return cargoes, many of the women with fine Black silk dresses, costing \$10 to \$15, and some nice thing for every child. It gives me much pleasure to aid them in all these things, to make them comfortable. Those that have had bad luck with their crops or been improvident are assisted by *Master*. None fear that they will suffer or have any little want which will not be gratified.⁵⁴

Northerners expressed their repugnance over the immorality of southern slave society. They saw black slave women nursing white babies, and they witnessed white and black children socializing with one another. Several Northerners expressed their

⁵² Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (1956 New York: Vintage Books, 1984), pp. 140-150; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, December 26, 1843, von Briesen, pp. 187-188.

⁵³ Gayle Thornbrough, et al, eds., The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Volume V, 1853- 1856: Including Letters to and from Calvin Fletcher (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1977), pp.456-457.

disgust over the undeniable evidence of miscegenation between slaves and southern slaveowners despite the gentry's attempts to blame miscegenation and moral degradation upon poor whites. In turn, southern slaveowners claimed that slavery established a more humane, paternalistic relationship between masters and slaves "who grew up together" than the relationships formed in the North between white industrialists and "their wage slaves."⁵⁵

Publications such as the *Southern Literary Messenger*, to which the Dupuy family subscribed; were one of many publications that focused upon the nation's diverse interpretations of morality and religion. The fundamental difference in philosophies between Virginia and Massachusetts was the deference to an establishment that created order versus the reverence for an individual's reason, potential and worth. One nineteenth century southern writer described the Northerners' mindset as "each man having discovered that he alone was the true expositor of Scripture, felt it a sacred duty to compel every other man to think and to act on all subjects as he himself thought and acted." In other words, Northerners advocated the individual's unequivocal morality and superiority over the infallibility of social and religious hierarchies. Southerners, on the other hand, asserted that they were God's chosen people. They defended their moral authority and their orthodox support for social and religious hierarchies through their

⁵⁴ Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, December 20, 1855, von Briesen, p. 257.

⁵⁵ William W. Freehling, pp. 14, 16, 44.

literal interpretations of the Bible. By noting the Bible's advocacy for slavery, for example, Southerners contended that abolitionists were heretics.⁵⁶

The internal migration movement and the creation of new states further eroded the common ground between the North and South. During the 1850's, slavery debates heightened when compounded by disputes over slave and free states. Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin further ignited the rancor between the two regions. Some Northerners rebutted Mrs. Stowe's work in regards to her regional prejudice, her perceptions of the South's social structure and her ideological views of abolition; however, many Northerners basically shared the same views expressed by Mrs. Stowe. White Southerners' responses to Mrs. Stowe's work, however, were obviously contrary. *The Southern Literary Messenger* exhorted that the popularity of Uncle Tom's Cabin confirmed "an evidence of the manner in which our enemies are employing literature for our overthrow."⁵⁷ The book's notoriety instigated some Northerners, transplanted Northerners and Southerners to quell the impact that Mrs. Stowe's book had upon Americans. Caroline Lee Hentz, a Massachusetts native who married a French immigrant and settled in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, wrote The Planter's Northern Bride (1854) for such a purpose. Her book was widely popular throughout America. One reason for her book's success was due to Mrs. Hentz's attempts to dispel antagonism and regional

⁵⁶ The Dupuy family also subscribed to a religious paper printed in Philadelphia entitled the *Observer*, and a political paper, the *Yeoman*. See Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner October 28, 1840, EDP; Dawson, "The Puritan and the Cavalier," pp. 598-605, 609-11, quote on p. 602.

⁵⁷ Quotation in Carme Manuel Cuenca, "An Angel in the Plantation: the Economics of Slavery and the Politics of Literary Domesticity in Caroline Lee Hentz's 'The Planter's Northern Bride,'" *The Mississippi Quarterly*, Winter 1997 v. 51 (1) p. 87.

prejudice between the white North and South. She focused on a unified country (albeit one that was unified under a benevolent patriarchy, and not under a capitalistic society) and not on distinct regions.⁵⁸

Mrs. Hentz and the book's heroine, Eulalia, a transplanted Northerner who marries a slaveowner, defend the South and slavery with similar arguments that Emily Howe Dupuy voiced between 1838-1840's in her correspondence. Emily assimilated to Southerners' ideologies of reciprocity and paternalism and she accepted the doctrine's postulation about blacks' helpless natures. Emily and Mrs. Hentz found themselves serving as mediators between Massachusetts and Virginia and the North and South. One communicates to her northern family and friends, and the other to the nation, that the North lacks a true understanding of Southerners' slave society. Their arguments mirrored the assertions voiced by white Southerners.⁵⁹

White slaveowners often asserted that slavery made the slaves more civil and Christian.⁶⁰ Emily supported these pro-slavery arguments when she portrayed her husband as a Christian role model for their slaves, and when she emphasized her husband's humane treatment of their slaves. She also contended that slavery served God's will when she claimed that a "great many people here think that slavery is permitted by God for very wise purposes. A great many [slaves] have been sent & probably many

⁵⁸ Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women & Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 103-136; Cuenca, "An Angel in the Plantation," pp. 87-105; see also Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, p. 246.

⁵⁹ Cuenca, pp. 87-105.

⁶⁰ Fox-Genovese, pp. 109, 197-199, 326-329.

more will be to Africa & the Gospel has been carried with them & in that way it may become generally disseminated throughout that dark region.”⁶¹ Emily insisted their slaves did not work hard and some only performed one chore. She also informed her family and northern friends that many of their slaves were literate and enjoyed many religious privileges, such as having meetings in their homes on a regular basis. The Dupuys were mindful of their slaves’ needs and comforts and Emily and her children made aprons, bonnets and caps for the slaves. The Dupuy daughters’ Mammy Aggy rode a horse with an escort when she traveled to Lynchburg to visit her daughter and in 1851 Emily had a house built for Aggy and her family. The slaves received any food they requested from the household’s table, Emily asserted, and if a slaveowner had to sell his slaves, the masters would ask their slaves if they wanted to be sold to a particular slaveowner and the slave would chose his next owner.⁶²

In their debates on slavery, white Southerners often claimed that southern masters were more humane in their treatment of slaves than were white Northerners with free, black laborers.⁶³ Emily made similar arguments when she noted that her husband honored the slaves’ industry by offering wages and personal privileges. Asa kept track of his slaves’ financial debts and credits and he paid his slaves if they worked on Holy days. In 1838 Emily reported “every man makes a crop to sell, besides having a gard[en] spot,

⁶¹ Fox-Genovese, pp. 334-337, 359 quotation on p. 336; Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, March 20, 1838; Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838, EDP. Asa Dupuy was among Prince Edward County residents who supported African colonization. In 1833 the county donated \$214 to the Virginia Assembly’s contribution of \$18,000 to transport free blacks to Liberia or to the American West. See Bradshaw, p. 280.

⁶² Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, March 20, 1838, EDP; Carrol, pp. 81-85.

⁶³ Fox-Genovese, pp. 62-64.

where they may r[ai]se all kinds of vegetables for themselves. They all come into the house looking very good natured . . . In the general I think the Negroes are as happy a people taken together as you generally meet with.⁶⁴

Southerners also defended slavery by illustrating how their laws illustrated slaves' preference for enslavement. In 1855 Virginia passed the Voluntary Enslavement law which permitted free blacks to enslave themselves with a master of their choice. The Act included protective measures for the free Negro upon giving up his freedom. Virginia was one of the last states to create this law. Other states that passed the Voluntary Enslavement law were Maryland, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Tennessee and Alabama. A transcript of this Act written by Emily was in the correspondence saved by her family in Princeton. The reason for Emily's transcription of this act is not clear. Providing her family with a copy of this act, however, may have reinforced her previous assertions that that slaves preferred slavery over freedom. Although southern whites asserted that slaves preferred freedom, Virginia's free blacks rarely relinquished their freedom.⁶⁵

Both Emily and Mrs. Hentz depicted the slaves' love and faithfulness for their southern owners and the master's paternal affection for his slaves. Both ladies portrayed the South's slave society as a reciprocal bond between the races. This shared responsibility, they implied, was the only way social order between superior and inferior

⁶⁴ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838, EDP.

⁶⁵ "An Act Providing for the Voluntary Enslavement of the Free Negroes," EDP; see also the Watkins Collection, # 24, VHS.

races could be maintained. To elucidate this view, Emily and Caroline Lee Hentz contrast the destitute Northern laborers' toils and tribulations with the slaves' happy, sheltered existence. Reminiscent of Emily's words, Mrs. Hentz stated "we give it as our honest belief, that the negroes of the South are the happiest labouring class on the face of the globe." Mrs. Hentz further asserted: "the negro slaves of the South are happiest, and, in some sense, the freest people in the world. The children and the aged and infirm work not at all, and yet have all the comforts and necessities of life provided for them. They enjoy liberty, because they are oppressed neither by care nor labor. . . . They who work for you, who create your income, are slaves, without the rights of slaves. Slaves without a master! . . . Free laborers have not a thousandth part of the rights and liberties of negro slaves."⁶⁶ Ex-slaves asserted, however, that whites had to look beyond the slave-like persona and "know the heart of the poor slave - learn his secret thoughts . . . A man who has been a slave knows and no one else can know, the yearnings to be free and the fear of making the attempt."⁶⁷

An interesting similarity between fictitious Eulalia and Emily Dupuy was that both were middle-class white ladies who improved their social status by marrying southern slaveowners. Carme Manuel Cuenca notes that Mrs. Hentz, unlike Mrs. Stowe, makes middle-class ladies the Christian mothers of a "public national political order."⁶⁸ Hentz indicates that Eulalia not only adopts but also perfects her new role as a plantation

⁶⁶ Cuenca, pp. 87-105.

⁶⁷ Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, pp.89-90.

⁶⁸ Cuenca, pp. 91-92.

mistress because of her middle class background. As a result, Eulalia both redefines and refines the aristocratic plantation mistress' role by bringing into it a democratic essence. "The Northern Eulalia," Cuenca writes, "is mistress, manager, doctor, nurse, counsellor, seamstress, teacher, housekeeper."⁶⁹ Emily Dupuy fulfilled those roles. Her industry, Christian values, intellect and her desire to be useful provided her with the means to redefine and refine the plantation mistress' role within her household. As a teacher and a plantation mistress, Emily nursed her slaves, educated the privileged and the poor, encouraged spiritual growth within her home and plantation, assisted her neighbors and comforted those less fortunate. Emily assimilated to Virginia's hierarchical ideology of slavery and social order, but the manner in which she fulfilled her role as a plantation mistress both complimented and differed from southern plantation mistresses who were not only born into the role but who were indoctrinated about their duties and their place in society.⁷⁰

Emily embraced evangelicalism and she abided by Protestant ethics of duty and industry, but she was not egalitarian. She epitomized evangelical femininity, for example, by teaching poor whites and slaves, but she was no reformer. Historian Elizabeth Varon asserts that some "women construed their benevolent duty narrowly: to ameliorate the conditions of slavery. But others, such as [Ann R] Page and [Mary Berkeley Minor] Blackford believed that they should serve as agents of the cause of

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 97-98.

⁷⁰ Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Sharla M. Fett, Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 9, 33, 64-67, 114-118, 134-135.

gradual emancipation.”⁷¹ Emily was amongst those who bestowed benevolence within the confines of her plantation and neighborhood. On the other hand, southern ladies such as Ann Page publicly embraced reform and colonization. Emily mentioned how slavery benefited free blacks’ colonization, but she did not advocate the cause.

The majority of southern upper-class women asserted that the South’s patriarchal, slave society reinforced rather than opposed natural order. Plantation mistresses defined their role through their duties within the plantation household and through their networks within their neighborhood.⁷² Emily’s duties included making clothing for the white and black households, preserving meats, fruits and vegetables, caring for the gardens, poultry and dairy and overlooking the needs of the boarders.⁷³ Scholars observed that slave-owning women took credit for the work performed by the slaves and rarely showed appreciation for the slaves’ labor.⁷⁴ Sometimes plantation mistresses mentioned bondsmen’s work but they did not mention slaves’ accomplishments.⁷⁵ In this respect, Emily varied from most wealthy ladies. While white, elite Southerners perceived their life of leisure as a privilege and a right, middle class northern families like the Howe family, viewed leisure as useless and lazy. Emily informed her northern egalitarian

⁷¹ Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, pp. 44-61, quotation on p. 47.

⁷² Fox-Genovese, pp. 38-63.

⁷³ Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, December 12, 1838, October 22, 1838, March 27, 1847; Emily Howe Dupuy to Lucinda Howe, March 20, 1838; Sarah Ann Skinner to [Mrs. Sarah Skinner], May 21, 1852; Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Ann Skinner, August 17, 1860, EDP; Bradshaw, pp. 350-354; Fox-Genovese, pp. 116-130.

⁷⁴ Fox-Genovese, p. 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 116-130.

family that having servants did not make her indolent. Emily clarified that she was more of a delegate and not the “real ‘operative’ in performing the drudgery necessary in a family.” She also credited the slaves for their work. She recorded how she and the slaves worked together to make the plantation self-sufficient. The wool slaves gathered from the plantation’s sheep and the cotton bondpeople picked from the fields, for example, clothed most of the slaves. After the weaver, a slave, made the cloth from the cotton, Emily cut the cloth and then handed the cloth to the seamstresses who made garments.⁷⁶

Plantation mistresses often noted their burden of caring for slaves.⁷⁷ Mary Boykin Chesnut censured “holy New England women” who were not “forced to have a negro village walk through their houses whenever they saw fit - dirty, slatternly, idle, ill-smelling by nature . . . [p]eople can’t love things dirty, ugly, repulsive, simply because they ought, but they can be good to them - at a distance.”⁷⁸ Emily lacked the animosity that many female gentry felt towards their slaves and she was more inclined to focus on slaves’ humanity. She felt genuine affection for her slaves, and the feelings seemed to be reciprocated. When Emily married Asa Dupuy and assumed the role of plantation mistress, she learned from her husband how to doctor and create medicines for the slaves. After her husband died, Emily bore the sole responsibility of caring for and doctoring the slaves. She made pills and nursed the bondpeople to health or she made their last days as

⁷⁶ Emily Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838, EDP.

⁷⁷ Fox-Genovese, pp. 129-130.

⁷⁸ Fox-Genovese, pp. 338, 339, 356-359. Quotations on pp. 338, 358-359.

comfortable as possible.⁷⁹ Emily acknowledged the challenges in her duties, but she perceived her duties not as a burden but as an enterprise. In May of 1842, for example, Emily and Asa nursed twenty-five slaves sick with typhus fever, all of whom survived. Emily explained how she, her husband and others cared for and nursed the slaves to health. She revealed the plantation system's vulnerability when slaves became ill. All other work on the plantation was on hold. For example, no one was available to watch two of Emily's girls, who were two and four years old, while Emily nursed the sick slaves. So, Emily placed her children with a group of slave children around the same ages in the yard and they attended to each other. None of the slaves died from the fever due to Asa Dupuy's medical skills, which, a neighborhood physician claimed, was comparable to his own medical knowledge.⁸⁰

Entertaining visitors and hosting parties played a prominent role for plantation mistresses because visiting was closely linked to neighborhood networks and reciprocity.⁸¹ While visitors in the North spent an afternoon or a couple of nights at a home, Southerners visited other plantations and stayed as long as a month and "if you dont happen to have beds in the hall, never mind it, but make pallets on the floor, for some of the younger ones." The Dupuys were generous, gracious hosts and they hosted several parties and housed numerous guests, but they were not as extravagant in exhibiting their wealth or their plantation's bounty. Asa Dupuy was a temperance man, so

⁷⁹ See Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838; Sarah Ann Skinner to [Sarah Skinner] May 21, 1852; Anna H. Whitteker, to [Cousin Alicia and Sister Sarah] August 10, [18]61, EDP.

⁸⁰ Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 19, 1842, EDP.

⁸¹ Ibid.

he, unlike most Virginians, did not “set out liquors nor wines to our company which is practiced in many families, & draws a great deal of worthless company around them.”

Emily, who found extravagant parties wasteful, stated “I have heard the saying here that the yankees eat nothing that they can sell whereas the virginians sell nothing they can eat. I believe the last is true any how, though it would be better for many of them if they would sell a great deal they eat, & pay their tax with it.”⁸²

Asa Dupuy’s health was not strong when he married Emily, and in 1846, his health worsened. He suffered from “hemorrhage of the lungs” and died on January 2, 1848.⁸³ In his will, dated June 9, 1847, Asa Dupuy directed his executors to sell the interest from his sister Ann’s land in Nottaway County and use the money for his estate. If the profits from his lands were not enough to pay off his debts, he directed his executor to sell his slaves. Emily received one third of his land and slaves of her choice, the house, kitchen furniture and carriages. She also received interest from his estate except from his land and slaves. He decreed that his estate be kept together for his children’s education and provisions. His lands were to be divided when all of his daughters married or were of age. Emily was to decide how to divide the estate. Asa also decreed to his executors that if there was a surplus of slaves or livestock on his lands, the executors were to spend no more than \$5,000 to purchase adjoining or neighboring land where his slaves or livestock

⁸² Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 28, 1840, EDP; Adams, pp. 95-96.

⁸³ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, July 28, 1839; “Correspondence of Emily Howe,” p. 13, EDP.

could settle. Asa also requested the executors to sell any slaves who became insubordinate or difficult.⁸⁴

Kirsten E. Wood asserts that widowhood in the nineteenth-century Southeast provides a unique insight into the social, cultural and economic means of slaveholding women. She argues that widowhood augmented the significance of, and the ties between, the extended family. Wood notes that when one's husband died, the slaveholding widow "was in a stranger country, with none but strangers around to comfort [her]." Wood argues that familial duty was obligatory in Virginia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the methods by which widows requested and obtained support from their family members altered during the antebellum period. Wood asserts that widows used two different approaches to maintain their power and social status. Firstly, they utilized their dependence upon their menfolk, and, secondly, they refined their family's dependence upon them. Instead of demanding their familial rights, for example, widows emphasized familial devotion and their feminine dependence upon their male kin, thereby softening the yoke of familial duty. Although these two approaches differed, they shared the same base - reciprocity. Southern culture emphasized reciprocity between the classes, genders and races in order to maintain social harmony.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Section 7, Will of Asa Dupuy in Watkins Papers, Mss1W3286a16-20, VHS. Executors of Asa Dupuy's last will and testament signed by Asa Dupuy and dated 9 June 1847 were Mr. Dickinson and Henry Watkins.

⁸⁵ Kirsten E. Wood, "The Strongest Ties that Bind Poor Mortals Together: Slaveholding Widows and Family in the Old Southeast," in Janet L. Coryell, Thomas H. Appleton, Jr., Anastasia Sims and Sandra Gioia, eds. *Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing with Powers that Be* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000), pp. 135-157, pp. 136-138, 152-154, quote is on p. 142.

Wood argues that Southerners resisted “the bourgeois individualism that was slowly taking root in the North, [and] cleaved to the more traditional view that each person had particular duties, and some had considerable privileges, according to his or her position in society.”⁸⁶ The wealthy widow’s role within the extended family increased her power within the household. The widow, for example, took on the responsibilities previously delegated to her deceased husband which included: maintaining her property, supervising and caring for her slaves, and conducting business matters with merchants.⁸⁷ Wood notes that southern ladies, unlike their northern counterparts, were socially and economically restricted within their rural plantations. Fathers, husbands or sons controlled the household’s finances and property, and social interactions with one’s neighbors required extended traveling. A southern lady’s security and social standing were dependent upon her family’s and/or her husband’s wealth. When an elite lady’s husband died, the widow maintained her independence and propriety through her family’s wealth and her ownership of slaves.⁸⁸ Historian Wood notes that a significant number of southern elite widows never remarried; this fact, Wood declares, illustrates how widows both maintained and modified the ideology of the plantation mistress. Widowhood altered a woman’s role by altering the feminine virtues of submission and self-sacrifice. Widows

⁸⁶ Wood, “The Strongest Ties that Bind Poor Mortals Together,” pp. 135-157. Quotation on p. 137.

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 135-136,145,152.

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 134- 143.

guarded their children's future by assuming the role of a plantation owner and serving as the head of a household.⁸⁹

After Asa died, Emily epitomized the southern elite widow to an extent. She managed and maintained the plantations and cared for her five young girls. She was in charge of their 1600 acre plantation, an additional 391 acres of land in Mississippi and 72 slaves. The plantation flourished with the help of her commission merchants who sold the cash crops, which included tobacco, wheat and corn. Other crops included hay, wheat, oats, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes and an abundant array of fruits and vegetables for home consumption. Livestock included cattle, sheep, hogs, horses, geese, chickens, ducks, turkeys and fowls. Southern ladies' feminine identity revolved around their fragile, helpless image which Emily found intolerable.⁹⁰ Her middle-class upbringing, self-reliance, industry and the support of her northern family provided her with the support she needed to manage the plantation. In addition, the strengths of reciprocity and family/neighbor networks, a proficient overseer and industrious slaves allowed her to maintain a self-sufficient plantation. With the combination of these factors, she had the means to sustain her husband's wealth and resources.⁹¹ In 1838, for example, they grew 12 to 15,000 bushels of wheat as well as corn and tobacco. In 1853 the plantation's harvest resulted in extensive amounts of wheat, oats and hay in addition to 140,000 hills of tobacco and 2,000 bushels of corn. There were some indications that the executors of

⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 156-157.

⁹⁰ Fox-Genovese, pp. 116-130.

⁹¹ Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838, EDP; Adams, pp. 80-95; Prince Edward County Personal Property Tax Records, 1847, Library of Virginia [hereafter cited as LVA].

Asa's estate may have sold some of the slaves. The number of slaves on the plantation between 1837 and 1863 tended to range between 60 and 75. The year 1858 had the largest number of slaves at 91 slaves. The year 1859 had the biggest reduction within the smallest time frame at 75 slaves.⁹² Emily did an admirable job in protecting her future and her daughters' inheritance even during the Civil War. When Union soldiers pilfered her plantation in 1865, for example, Emily appealed to the Union Army for security and on April 21, 1865, the Provost Marshall granted Emily Dupuy's family and plantation protection from plundering groups and he had ordered soldiers to guard her plantation.⁹³ In 1866 Emily still had 1580 acres of her plantation when she divided the estate for her daughters.⁹⁴

Unlike the widows portrayed by Wood, Emily did not utilize her dependence upon her menfolk to maintain a leisure status. Her duties, which were typical of most plantation mistresses, did not mirror a leisurely lifestyle, but unlike most plantation mistresses, Emily lacked the desire to display the appearance of a leisurely, extravagant lifestyle. However, she utilized the values of reciprocity and family/neighborhood networks to sustain her livelihood. Emily strongly valued family networks and reciprocity. Her life in Prince Edward was more congenial and stable due to the positive

⁹² Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838, EDP; Adams, pp. 80-95; Prince Edward County Personal Property Tax Records, 1837-1863, LVA.

⁹³ Posting from Provost Marshall George and Macey by Commander Major General Meade, Headquarters Army of the Potomac, Office of the Provost Marshall General, dated April 21, 1865. Office of Major Gen. Meade to Mrs. Emily Dupuy, Item # 25, EDP.

⁹⁴ Section 7, Plats of the Dupuys land, in Watkins Papers, VHS.

relationships and networks she formed with her husband's family.⁹⁵ Emily valued family/neighborhood networks in Virginia culture because she understood they were factors for social harmony, stability and control. In a letter to her sister Sarah dated July 1841, for example, Emily wrote of the Dance's eldest daughter, Sarah, and her religious faith and courage in facing death. Emily noted how a dying mother guaranteed her children's welfare and future by relying not solely upon the surviving spouse but by placing her children in the care of her maternal family.⁹⁶

Emily revealed how neighbors cared and relied upon each other in times of sickness and need. Emily was gracious and generous with her neighbors, for example, when she supplied surplus fruits to sick or poor neighbors.⁹⁷ Emily also made bonnets and caps, cut ornaments and decorated candlesticks for neighborhood celebrations and, Anna remarked, Emily "never charged [the neighbors] any thing."⁹⁸ In return, Emily related how her neighbors treated her as family in offering assistance whenever needed. In a letter dated October 1838, for example, she wrote: "I have found (though far away from kindred of the same blood,) friends who could not be surpassed in their kindness to me, by the nearest relatives. I have had two attacks of billious fever, the past summer which were not very severe, but confined me several weeks to the house, & if I had been in Princeton, I could not have received more attention from my neighbors, & friends."⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Lucinda Howe, March 20, 1838, EDP; Carrol, pp. 81-96.

⁹⁶ Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, July 3, 1841, EDP.

⁹⁷ Emily Howe Dupuy to Miss. Sarah Ann Skinner, January 24, 1855, EDP.

⁹⁸ Anna H. Whitteker to Sarah Skinner, November 8, 1847, EDP.

⁹⁹ Emily H. Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, October 22, 1838, EDP.

Emily wrote of uncertainties southern women faced, however, when husbands of modest incomes died and family connections did not always offer relief or security. For example, she wrote of Nannie Burwell, one of the Dance's daughters and the misfortunes she faced when her husband died: "[s]he was in great affliction, & her condition is a sad one, with one little child, & the prospect of another, dependent [sic] on Mr. B's father for a home, who you know is peculiar in his disposition, & her own father unable to do any thing for her."¹⁰⁰ Families who were once affluent took advantage of neighbor networks in order to maintain their leisure status. In January 1855, for instance, Emily expressed her relief when one destitute family moved out of the neighborhood: "[I]t really seemed before they went away, that they felt their neighbors were in duty, bound to do every thing for them."¹⁰¹

Emily had been appalled by elite Virginians' indulgent lifestyles, southern belles' helplessness and Southerners' debauchery.¹⁰² In a letter to her sister Sarah, for example, Emily wrote of a Dr. B in Princeton, Massachusetts and his failure to lead an industrious, useful life. She compared his situation to nineteenth-century Virginia gentlemen who lived in a society that honed such lifestyles:

As for Dr. B I never expected him to shine in the world. Although possessed of ordinary talents there has been so great a defect in his education he can never become a man of much eminence. You know what that defect is very well, accustomed from his birth to every indulgence he has never been called to exercise that self denial or make that exertion which is necessary to the

¹⁰⁰ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, January 24, 1855, EDP.

¹⁰¹ Emily Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, January 24, 1855, EDP.

¹⁰² E.H. Dupuy to her daughter Lavallette, November 16, 1860, EDP.

formation of good character. There are a great many young men of that description here, where parents have wealth & never put them to business, or if they do, dont make them follow it & the consequence is they become extravagant, & dissipated & soon become no account to themselves or anybody else, & are a nuisance to society.¹⁰³

Like Emily, Elijah Fletcher acknowledged how Virginia's slave society hindered children's sense of morals and industry. He remarked to his brother Calvin, for example, that the South "was a bad country in which to bring up boys. I wish mine could be raised in the indigence and simplicity that you and I were. You may feel very happy that you are not in a slave state with your fine Boys, for it is a wretched country to destroy the morals of youth." He encouraged his sons to be industrious and advocated his daughters' refinement and all his children were financially well off except for Lucian, "a great profligate" whom an Amherst County sheriff labeled as "the worst outlaw in the history of the county." Elijah's son, Sidney, and his daughters spent their lives steeped in culture, travel and refinement. They lived the typical lives of plantation master and mistresses. Unlike Emily, however, Elijah did not instill middle class values in his children. His years of poverty in Vermont influenced his ambition to build his wealth and provide financial security for his wife and children. His brother Calvin witnessed the harm of children's expectancy to live off their parents' labors when he stated "God never intended families to have controle over what they left after death. The future so far as relates to worldly goods does not belong to the steward or accumulator. When he dies his mission

¹⁰³ Emily Howe Dupuy to Mrs. Sarah Skinner, August 15, 1840, EDP.

is ended in this life.”¹⁰⁴ Emily Howe, like many slaveowners, did not want to deprive her children of their inheritance and financial security. Although Emily maintained the plantation for her children’s inheritance, however, she, unlike Elijah, made certain that her daughters’ education offered them a sense of independence and industry beyond their parents’ wealth. Her efforts boded well, because her daughters obtained teaching positions to relieve their financial burdens during the Reconstruction era.¹⁰⁵ Emily’s daughter, Mary Purnell, for example, became the first of the Dupuy sisters to pursue an advanced education when she attended Leavenworth School for Girls in Petersburg in 1855.¹⁰⁶

In 1883, Emily Dupuy, the youngest of the three sisters, was the first to die. Her daughter, Maria Lucinda Dupuy Anderson wrote of her mother’s death and life: “She has seemed so bright and cheerful ever since she has been with us - has enjoyed her Church privileges, . . . I have often heard her express the wish that she might not outlive her usefulness and might not give trouble by a lingering illness and if she had had her choice I think she would have chosen to die as she did.”¹⁰⁷ Virginia society made Emily’s goals for security, stability and usefulness attainable. She honed her usefulness within the

¹⁰⁴ Quotation in Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, March 29, 1831, von Briesen, pp. 122; Elijah Fletcher to Calvin Fletcher, January 26, 1841, January 10, 1843, June 2, 1845, October 24, 1847; Elijah Fletcher to his Children, August 22, 1846, von Briesen, pp. 167, 185, 196, 201, 210-211; Ann Marshall Whitley, Indiana Fletcher Williams of Sweet Briar (Sweet Briar: Sweet Briar College, 1947), quotation about Lucian on p. 2; quotation in Gayle Thornbrough, et al; eds. The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Volume VI, 1857-1860: Including Letters to and from Calvin Fletcher (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), p. 567.

¹⁰⁵ E.H. Dupuy, Linden to her nephew William P. Dickinson January 4, 1869, EDP.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Purnell Dupuy, Emily’s eldest daughter, married Richard Henry Watkins, whose plantation Oldham was adjacent to the Dupuy’s plantation. See “Correspondence of Emily Howe,” p. 14, EDP.

¹⁰⁷ Maria Lucinda Dupuy Anderson to my dear aunt [Anna H. Whitteker] December 29, 1883, EDP.

confines of a plantation system as a family member, teacher, slaveowner and neighbor. In many ways, she identified more strongly with Southerners' concepts of slavery and social hierarchy than she did with the ideology of egalitarianism that was spreading throughout New England. She maintained her Protestant values of industry and independence within the traditional setting of an hierarchical slave society. Southerners' ideal image of plantation mistresses as delicate, vulnerable, dependent ladies starkly contradicted Emily's Protestant ethics. In her eyes, her value spawned from her usefulness and industry. She honed and inculcated this ideology into her role as a plantation mistress.

CONCLUSION

Elijah Fletcher, Anna Howe Whitteker and Emily Howe Dupuy took different venues when they prospered in antebellum Virginia, but all three shared common characteristics. As educators, all three benefited from Virginia's acute needs for teachers. They also perpetuated familial networks and all three displayed aspects of bourgeois individualism. Beyond these common ties, however, all three differed in how they assimilated to Virginia culture.

Although he acknowledged the evil influence slavery had upon children and society, Elijah viewed antebellum Virginia as a land of opportunity. As a teacher, he exemplified how northern men maintained their honor through industry, and he contained egalitarian views about white men and women's familial duties. His devotion and boundless generosity towards his family illustrated how Northerners and Southerners valued family networks equally, but Elijah's concepts of familial duty and reciprocity were based upon middle-class values. Elijah played a stronger role than did Anna or Emily in perpetuating Virginia's hierarchical slave society through his business ventures and through his selling and hiring of slaves and land. He left a definite, public impact upon his region by promoting internal improvements and reform as a civic leader, landowner and as the owner of a newspaper. Although he placed equal value upon white men and women's education, he, like most upper-class Virginians, perpetuated his

daughters' dependence upon wealth by placing higher value on their refinement than upon their industry.

Anna comprehended how rural Virginia's lack of industry and backwardness served as sources of opportunity for her industry and education; but she continued to view Piedmont Virginia as the land of Sodom. She obtained personal autonomy by supporting herself and her mother, by taking advantage of the money she obtained in Piedmont Virginia's slave society and by profiting from the egalitarian rights she enjoyed in western Virginia. Her egalitarian convictions fueled her resolve to educate the poor and enslaved in three of Virginia's regions. Historian Elizabeth Fox-Genovese contends that the foundation of northern women's support for either individual rights or national rights was based upon a common principle that "[a]ll individuals should enjoy equal rights by virtue of their status as individuals and independent of their other innate attributes." Although Virginia women's impact upon the reform movement was escalating during the nineteenth century, Emily neither sought nor advocated a public role in the reform movement beyond her role as a teacher to poor whites and slaves.

Emily acknowledged Virginians' sins of debauchery, but she perceived the evil as being as much of a class problem in the North as a regional dilemma in the South. Unlike most plantation mistresses, she instilled independence and industry within her daughters. Like many slaveowners, however, she maintained her security by relying upon a slave society and she viewed antebellum Piedmont Virginia as a land of opportunity and security. She honed her familial and neighborhood networks to maintain her livelihood and sense of usefulness as a plantation mistress. Her convictions about slavery and

women's roles were more closely linked to the ideology of the private, benevolent southern plantation mistress than that of the northern egalitarian middle-class woman. Both Anna and Emily adhered to their feminine sphere in their roles as teachers, wives and mothers, but Anna, more so than Emily, embraced the bourgeois individualism that was progressing throughout nineteenth-century Massachusetts.

Anna was more egalitarian in her outlook than were Elijah and Emily. While she believed the slaves should reap the benefits of their labors, Elijah and Emily asserted that paternalism and noblesse oblige compensated for their slaves' bondage. Anna advocated her own individual rights to obtain an education, to seek employment, to purchase a house and to live a useful, independent life. She supported the basic human rights of slaves to receive an education, to live Christian, moral lives, and to reap the benefits, independence, security and comfort of their labor. Unlike her sister Anna, Emily was not an apparent advocate of bourgeois individualism. She perceived the slaves as people but she justified the slave system based not upon the slaves' individual rights and "innate attributes" but upon a master's paternalism. A humane slaveowner allowed his slaves to receive an education, to live Christian, moral lives, and to receive basic comforts and security in exchange for their labor. Elijah's benevolence towards his slaves reinforced his image as a wealthy, benevolent slaveowner. His bondpeople enjoyed certain freedoms, but only while he still lived. In summary, Elijah, Emily and Anna acknowledged how Virginians who abused their power, squandered their wealth and lived a life of debauchery portrayed their region as the land of Sodom. Yet their views of

antebellum Virginia as a land of opportunity differed due to their goals, ambitions and their concepts of social order and natural rights.

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